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# RHODE ISLAND

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## HISTORICAL TRACTS.

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NO. 10.

*Series 1.*

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PROVIDENCE  
SIDNEY S. RIDER.  
1880.



RHODE ISLAND  
HISTORICAL TRACTS  
NO. 10.  
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AN  
HISTORICAL INQUIRY  
CONCERNING THE  
ATTEMPT TO RAISE A REGIMENT OF SLAVES  
IN  
RHODE ISLAND.



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1880.

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AN

HISTORICAL INQUIRY  
CONCERNING  
THE ATTEMPT TO RAISE  
A  
REGIMENT OF SLAVES  
BY  
RHODE ISLAND

DURING THE  
WAR OF THE REVOLUTION.

BY  
SIDNEY S. RIDER.

WITH

SEVERAL TABLES

Prepared by LT.-COL. JEREMIAH OLNEY, Commandant

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## PREFATORY NOTE.



THIS Tract is a purely historical inquiry. This State has been highly commended by several writers for having inaugurated and continued the policy of employing slaves and negroes to fill her quotas in the Continental Army during the war of the Revolution; and much has been written in our histories touching the services of these slave soldiers in battle highly creditable to them. How far these statements are in accordance with the facts in the case, is the purpose of this inquiry. With this end in view the writer has first given many extracts from former writers relating to the case. These are followed by the laws under which the battalion was formed, and by documentary evidence concerning its service. These in turn are followed by lists of the slaves which were purchased, and by notes concerning several of them. They seem never to have received the bounty which the law, under which they enlisted promised to them; a pretext being set up that their liberty was given to them in lieu of bounty. Nor do they appear ever to have received the allowance given the white soldiers for the depreciation of the money in which they were paid. Finally it appears that they were deprived of large sums due them as wages by means of forged orders. In fact the frauds perpetrated upon them seem to find a parallel in the immense frauds



which took place on the formation of the Fourteenth Rhode Island (colored) Regiment in the late Rebellion. Following these are several valuable tables prepared by Colonel Jeremiah Olney, relating to the officers and soldiers concerned. A short memoir of this officer is prefixed, the first which has appeared in any Rhode Island publication.

Concerning the services of Colonel Jeremiah Olney during the war, there can be but one opinion; he was always in the field and always in action. The writer frankly confesses that he has conceived a liking for the sturdy soldier; but he finds it very difficult with the means at his command to give with exactness the details of his engagements, possibly some of his battles are omitted, and possibly some are mentioned at which he was not present. The wish of the writer is to do something to rescue the fame of an honest soldier from oblivion.

It is unnecessary for the author to say that in this investigation he sought no end other than the truth, and that he was ready to adopt any opinion which the search justified. The question simply was whether the statements which have been so often made were the truth, for Truth alone is History.



TO THE MEMORY OF  
  
COLONEL JEREMIAH OLNEY,

A RHODE ISLAND SOLDIER.



THE family of Olney of Rhode Island gave to the war of the Revolution the services of four of its members. Jeremiah Olney, who became a Colonel; Stephen Olney, who became a Captain; Christopher Olney, who became a Major, and Coggeshall Olney, who also became a Major. These men all did efficient service and have left honorable records. With the first only have we to do in this Tract.

Jeremiah Olney was the son of Joseph and Elizabeth Olney. He was born in Providence December 7, 1749, O. S. His mother was the daughter of Colonel Peter Mawney. [Le Moyne.] The first mention of him in Colonial annals is as one of the managers or directors of a lottery granted by the General Assembly for the purpose of raising funds to aid Mr. Jeremiah Hopkins, of Coventry. This person represented to the Assembly that he understood the business of a gunsmith sufficiently to be able to manufacture small arms, provided he could be supplied with a small capital to work with.



It was in December, 1774, just preceding the breaking out of the war of the Revolution, the Assembly was disposed to encourage the manufacture of guns, and granted the lottery to raise two hundred dollars. The following year Olney enlisted in the Rhode Island Army of Observation, which was so rapidly raised after the battle at Lexington. He was commissioned<sup>1</sup> by the State as a Captain in Col. Daniel

1. This commission is signed by Henry Ward, Secretary of the Colony, and bears date May 8, 1775. Governor Wanton had been re-elected Governor of Rhode Island. But having protested against the act for raising the Army of Observation, he now refused to sign the commissions of the officers. For these and divers other reasons the Assembly refused Governor Wanton the right to take the oath of office, and appointed Ward to sign the commissions. The Assembly, after enumerating their reasons for suspending Governor Wanton, say: "By all which he hath manifested his intention to defeat the good People of these colonies in their present glorious struggle to transmit inviolate to Posterity those sacred Rights they have received from their ancestors." A form of commission was adopted, in which each appointee was "in His Majesty's name George the Third, by the Grace of God, &c., authorized, empowered and commissioned to have, take and exercise the office, &c.; and in case of invasion or assault of a common enemy to infest or disturb this or any other of His Majesty's colonies in America, you are to alarm and gather together the company under your command, or any part thereof, as you shall deem sufficient and therewith to the utmost of your skill and ability you are to resist, expel, kill and destroy them in order to *preserve the interest of His Majesty* and his good subjects in these parts," &c. Following this commission, Congress gave Captain Olney a commission as Captain in the "Army of the United Colonies." It bears date July 1, 1775, and is signed by John Hancock.



Hitchcock's regiment. In this position he served during the summer of 1775 at Prospect Hill, near Cambridge, Mass., and at the Battle of Bunker Hill. On the expiration of his term of service, December 31, 1775, he enlisted for another year, and carried the larger part of his company with him.<sup>1</sup> At the close of this campaign Captain Olney marched with his company to the neighborhood of New York; during this year, 1776, occurred the battles on Long Island August 27, Harlem Heights September 16, White Plains October 28, Trenton December 26. On the 3d January, 1777, the battle of Princeton was fought, and on 13th of the same month Captain Olney was commissioned a Lieutenant-Colonel in the Second Rhode Island Regiment.<sup>2</sup> In

1. At this time Captain Olney was commissioned by Congress to be a Captain in the Eleventh Regiment of foot in the Army of the United Colonies. The commission bears date January 1, 1776, and is signed by John Hancock.

2. On the 5th January, 1778, Lieutenant-Colonel Olney received from Congress a commission as Lieutenant-Colonel in "a Rhode Island Regiment commanded by Colonel Angell, to take rank the 13th day of January, 1777, in the Army of the United States, raised for the defence of American Liberty," &c. This commission is signed by Henry Laurens. On the 12th of April, 1779, another commission was given him by Congress to be a Lieutenant-Colonel of the Second Rhode Island Regiment, to take rank from the 13th January, 1777. This commission is signed by John Jay.



this capacity he served at Brandywine on the 11th of September, and at Red Bank or Fort Mercer, on the Delaware river, below Philadelphia, October 22, 1777. When this post was summoned to surrender Colonel Olney was sent to meet the officer of the enemy who made the demand, and who threatened no quarter if they resisted, since they were rebels to the King. Colonel Olney's reply betrays the character of the man: "We shall not ask for, nor expect any quarter, but we mean to defend this fort to the last extremity," and they did so. His kinsman Stephen, in describing the Colonel's bearing on this occasion, says; "He was as brave a man as any in the army." Early in the year 1778 Lt.-Col. Olney was sent home with Colonel Greene and Major Flagg to recruit men to make up the Rhode Island quota. Out of this movement grew the Negro Battalion. In this year, on the 28th June, occurred the battle of Monmouth; the writer of Colonel Olney's obituary informs us that this was one of the battles in which Colonel Olney took part. Two months later, on the 29th August, took place the battle of Rhode Island.

From this time until the summer of 1780 little



active military service took place in the northern departments, but Lieut.-Col. Olney was engaged in another field; on the 26th April, 1780, he was married to Miss Sally Cooke,<sup>1</sup> the daughter of Governor Nicholas Cooke. In the peculiar phraseology of the time the young lady was described as "possessing every accomplishment to render the connubial state desirable." The Colonel was soon in the military field again. On the 23d of June he, with a part of his regiment, fought the bloody battle of Springfield,<sup>2</sup> in New Jersey. He had with him on that day only a hundred and sixty of his men; forty of them, one in

1. This estimable lady survived her husband many years, the date of her death, which took place in Providence, is given by the Pension Office as October 20th, 1842. Snow's Index gives it as November 2. The Providence Journal of Tuesday, November 1st, prints a short obituary notice, saying she died on the preceding Sunday; this would have been October 30th, 1842, and we believe is the correct date. She was in her 87th year.

2. Mrs. Williams in her life of Stephen Olney gives the date of this battle as the 23d of January, and says the enemy retired to winter quarters. This must certainly be an error.

Samuel Smith, a Rhode Island soldier, says he did service in this battle, and gives an account of it: "We contended in this engagement nearly an hour, until in fact the British had nearly surrendered to us, when we were obliged to retreat a short distance on a height of ground, and took shelter first in an orchard, and from thence we retreated to an oak grove. Here we had the advantage of them. Our captain now ordered every man to shelter himself by standing behind a tree. In this engagement there was not a man on the



every four, were either killed or wounded, but he won a victory—rather a different result this from the losses of Colonel Greene's Battalion, at the battle of Rhode Island two years before.

Lieut.-Col. Olney was with his regiment at Point Bridge on the Croton River on the night of the 14th May, 1781, when the British cavalry made a dash on the rear of the regiment, killing Colonel Greene and Major Flagg and disabling about forty men. By this casualty Lieutenant-Colonel Olney became the commander of the regiment, and was commissioned Lieutenant-Colonel Commandant.<sup>1</sup>

Concerning the promotions which followed the death of Colonel Greene there exists some interest-

American side killed or wounded, except one captain who received a shot through the left arm, a flesh wound. (This must have been Captain Olney.) The next day after the battle we were employed in burying the dead in the burying ground, and conveying the wounded to the hospital." Having been driven from the ground and obliged to take shelter behind trees and not having a man killed or wounded, a doubt is raised as to whose dead they were burying. This little memoir is singularly full of errors. *Memoirs of Samuel Smith with notes by Charles I. Bushnell*, p. 13, New York, 1860.

1. This commission bears date September 6, 1781, and the rank was to be taken May 14, 1781. On the 10th of October, 1783, Lieutenant-Colonel Olney was made a Colonel by Brevet in the Army of the United States, and on the 10th February, 1784, he was given the rank of Colonel in the Army of the United States, in command of the Rhode Island Regiment, to take effect from 14th May, 1781.



ing memoranda. From his camp near Dobbs's Ferry, on the 19th August, 1781, Lieutenant-Colonel Olney addressed a letter to Governor Greene concerning the promotions necessary by reason of the casualties of the 14th May; he says: "Out of respect to the unfortunate I postponed writing to your Excellency at an earlier period on the subject of vacancies occasioned by the deaths of Colonel Greene and Major Flagg; it has however become necessary for the good of the service." He thereupon recommended Coggeshall Olney to be First Major, John S. Dexter to be Second Major, Daniel S. Dexter and Dutec Jerauld to be Captains, Jeremiah Greenman and William Pratt to be Lieutenants, and Reuben Johnson to be Ensign; he also recommends for appointment two gentlemen from Connecticut who had been doing duty as volunteers in the regiment. Colonel Olney sent this letter by Lieutenant Oliver Jenckes who, on reaching Providence found the Assembly in session at Newport, to which place he repaired and presented his letters to the Governor. Lieutenant Jenckes says they read the letter in the upper house, then it was taken to the lower house



and read, whereupon Commodore Hopkins and others opposed any action being taken upon it, and the lower house so voted, but Lieutenant Jenckes went back with it to the upper house and informed the Governor concerning the vote. The Governor at once went to the lower house and urged the passage of a vote confirming the promotions; fortunately Commodore Hopkins and those who before had opposed the measure had stepped out, and there being no further opposition, the promotions were confirmed with the exception of the two gentlemen from Connecticut.

In October, 1781, occurred the battles at Yorktown, which were the last severe battles in which Colonel Olney was engaged.

In the winter of 1781-'82 Colonel Olney was in Rhode Island obtaining men, and in June of the latter year again took the field, but no active military services were required. In the early winter of 1782-3 Colonel Olney went with his regiment into winter quarters at Saratoga, where they remained until the close of the war and the expiration of their term of service, when they were



disbanded<sup>1</sup> and returned to their homes in Rhode Island. While at Saratoga the "Blacks" were detached from the regiment to take part in the expedition for the capture of Oswego.<sup>2</sup> This was in February, 1783, and was a terrible ordeal for the poor negroes, some account of which appears later in this Tract (p. 63). Major Coggeshall Olney in a letter to Colonel Olney concerning this affair says: "On the 4th of the month (February, 1783,) Colonel Willett called for a detachment of two hundred men

1. The memoir of Samuel Smith, heretofore mentioned, says concerning this disbanding: "I was selected to drive the Colonel's baggage to Providence under command of a lieutenant and a small guard and then discharged without money or clothes." *Memoir of Samuel Smith*, p. 22, New York, 1860. It was the same with the remainder of the regiment, the State was not then in financial condition to pay her soldiers.

2. Samuel Smith, from whose curiously erroneous story we have before made an extract, in speaking of this expedition, gives the following ludicrous statement concerning it: "From Yorktown we marched to Saratoga, a long and tedious march, where we made our headquarters until the spring of 1783. In the winter, after the lakes had frozen up, we went to storm a fort on the frontier. Our army was conveyed in stages. In crossing Niagara river on the ice, just above the Falls, one stage containing six men and a driver slipped sideways into the river and was carried over the Falls and lost." Mr. Smith fails to tell us how a detachment in passing from Saratoga to Oswego came to be at Niagara, or how in passing through a frontier wilderness, with an Indian for a guide, stages could be used—and this is called history. *Memoirs of Samuel Smith*, with notes by Charles I. Bushnell, p. 21, New York, 1860.



from the regiment, properly officered, by orders of His Excellency, to march with his regiment in order to surprise and take Oswego Fort, which I believe would have been effected had not the guide missed his way the night they advanced to storm the fort, and led them some miles from the fort into a large beaver swamp, where the men broke in, wet themselves, and many froze. They returned unsuccessful. Thirty-four of our lads are sent to the Albany Hospital; these must lose their limbs by the frost. Seventy more were forwarded to this garrison in sleighs; these were much frost bitten, and will not be fit for duty for some time. Nicholas Willson of Newport was drowned in the Mohawk river. Four others were left, supposed to be frozen to death. The remainder of the detachment is not yet got in; the party underwent everything but death itself."

While Colonel Olney remained with his regiment at Saratoga, orders were sent to him by Major-General Lord Stirling in obedience to orders from Washington, to detach a company under command of a captain to proceed into the New Hampshire Grants and there to arrest two citizens, viz., Luke



Knowlton and Samuel Wells, on a charge of carrying on a dangerous correspondence with the enemy. This arrest had been ordered by Congress in secret session. Colonel Olney detailed Captain Ebenezer Macomber for the service; on his arrival at the residences of the parties Captain Macomber found they had fled. In his official report he says he was informed that their flight was caused by a letter from Jonathan Arnold, Esq., who had informed them of the action of Congress concerning their intended arrest. Captain Macomber returned to Saratoga on the 6th January, 1783, and made his official report; Colonel Olney had left Saratoga for Providence two days previously. The officer in command thereupon sent Captain Macomber with his report to Lord Stirling, at Albany. The latter officer being very sick (he died on the 15th of the same month), Captain Macomber returned, and the documents were forwarded to Congress.

In the summer and fall of 1783 Colonel Olney's regiment was disbanded, and he returned to Providence and to private life. In 1790 he received the appointment from Washington of Collector of Customs for



the port of Providence, which position he retained until 1809, having discharged the duties of the office to the satisfaction of the Government and with credit to himself. His resignation was hastened by the passage of the Embargo Act, which caused so much bitter feeling. Colonel Olney felt it to be a very wrong measure and that he could not conscientiously assist in its execution; in his letter to President Jefferson resigning the office, he says: "Having fought the battles of my country through a long and perilous war, I cannot now become instrumental in assisting to rivet upon my countrymen those very chains and fetters which I, on a former and memorable occasion, lent my feeble but zealous assistance to burst asunder."<sup>1</sup>

Colonel Olney was possessed of a modest and quiet disposition. He was never an intriguer or seeker for office. He attended strictly to the duties of his position. When in the field he fought as a soldier should, and when he retired to civil life he carried with him the discipline and system which he had learned so well to prize. He was methodical

1: Providence Gazette, February 18, 1809.



and exact in all his transactions. This is particularly to be seen in the carefully prepared tables presented in this Tract. There are in the Acts and Resolves other tables prepared by him relating to the soldiers, which are too extensive to be admitted here. His letters were always written in a neat and legible style, and his spelling was correct; a grace which did not always adorn the letters of his contemporaries. An excellent instance of his careful habits is found in the fact that one of the only two existing rolls of the soldiers of the Army of Observation in 1775 was his. This is also true of the rolls of the Rhode Island soldiers of 1776. Colonel Olney does not appear to have ever served the State in the General Assembly, nor does his name appear in the record of officers of the town of Providence. On the occasion of the death of Washington elaborate preparations were made by the citizens to celebrate the event with suitable funeral obsequies. A committee was appointed, of which Colonel Olney was a member and it was from his house that the procession received the bier.

Colonel Olney was one of the earliest members of



the Rhode Island Society of the Cincinnati; he served at times as its Treasurer, Vice-President and President. His certificate of membership, printed upon white silk and bearing the signatures of Washington and of Knox, still ornaments the walls of his former home, now occupied by Mrs. Anna A. Carr, whose son is the great grandson of the soldier. Colonel Olney died at Providence, November 10, 1812. He was buried in the North Burial Ground, where so many men now repose who were once so active in Rhode Island affairs. Rude and incomplete as is this sketch, it is at least an honest effort to preserve the memory of a Rhode Island soldier who drew his sword at Bunker Hill and sheathed it not until after the victory at Yorktown.



THE  
RHODE ISLAND  
BLACK "REGIMENT"  
OF  
1778.



EXTRACTS CONCERNING THE SERVICES  
OF THE  
"BLACK REGIMENT."

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THE services of that body of Rhode Island Continental soldiers, sometimes called the "Black Regiment," and at other times "Colonel Greene's Battalion," during the war of the Revolution, has been the subject of remarks by several writers at sundry times. These remarks will be presented in the form of quotations, the first one is from an eminent Rhode Island scholar; in speaking of these men he says: "Then it was that our black regiment, with their cocked hats and black plumes tipped with white, moving with charged bayonets as a single man, twice or thrice rushed on the banded force of British and Hessians and as often drove them from the ground."<sup>1</sup> The authority given for

1. Hist. Dis., Job Durfee, p. 37, Prov., 1847. Works, p. 307, Prov., 1849.



this statement by the learned orator is tradition. In a work published in 1855,<sup>1</sup> appears what purports to be an extract from a speech delivered in Congress in 1828 by the Honorable Tristram Burges: "At the commencement of the Revolutionary war, Rhode Island had a number of slaves. A regiment of them was enlisted into the Continental service, and no braver men met the enemy in battle; but not one was permitted to be a soldier until he had first been made a freeman."<sup>2</sup>

In this same volume there is an extract from a speech stated to have been delivered by Governor William Eustis<sup>3</sup> in 1820: "The blacks formed an entire regiment, and they discharged their duty with zeal and fidelity. Their gallant defence of Red Bank, in which the black regiment bore a part, is among the proofs of their valor." Then follows remarks by the author of the volume: "In this contest

1. Colored Patriots of the American Revolution, W. C. Nell, p. 126-131, Boston, 1855.

2. Speech of T. Burges in U. S. House of Rep., delivered Feb., 1828, on the Bill for the relief of Marigny D'Auterive, *Manuf. & Far. Jour.*, Feb. 11, 1828.

3. Dr. William Eustis was a Surgeon in the Revolution. At the time he delivered this speech he was U. S. Representative from Massachusetts; he was afterwards Governor of Massachusetts.



it will be recollected that four hundred men met and repulsed after a terrible and sanguinary struggle, fifteen hundred Hessian troops headed by Count Dunop. The glory of the defence of Red Bank, which has been pronounced one of the most heroic actions of the war, belongs in reality to black men; yet who now hears them spoken of in connection with it. Among the traits which distinguish the black regiment was devotion to their officers. In the attack made upon the American lines near Croton river (during the night) of the 13th (14th) May, 1781, Colonel Greene was cut down and mortally wounded; but the sabres of the enemy (a couple of hundred and odd cavalry surprised them in the night) only reached him through the bodies of his faithful guard of blacks, who hovered over him to protect him, *and every one of whom was killed.*"<sup>1</sup> The italics are thus in the original. Another extract from the same volume, purports to have been taken from a speech delivered by Dr. Harris, a Revolutionary veteran, in 1842

1. Although this extract appears as original in the "Colored Patriots," yet in Mr. Livermore's Research (p. 154), it is given as a part of the speech of Governor Eustis.



in New Hampshire before a Presbyterian anti-slavery society. After relating his times and places of service, the speaker says: "There was a *black* regiment in the same situation. Yes, a regiment of *negroes* fighting for *our* liberty and independence,—not a white man among them but the officers,—stationed in this same dangerous and responsible position. Had they been unfaithful or given way before the enemy, all would have been lost. *Three times in succession* were they attacked, with most desperate valor and fury, by well disciplined and veteran troops, and *three times* did they successfully repel the assault, and thus preserve our army from capture." There is likewise presented an extract from an article in the New York Courier and Enquirer, the date of which is not given, but which must have been during the years 1842 or 1843. In speaking of the Rhode Island colored people the writer says: "The fathers of these people were distinguished for their patriotism and bravery in the war of the Revolution, and the Rhode Island colored regiment fought on one occasion until half their number were slain; there was not a regiment in the service which



did more soldierly duty or showed itself more devotedly patriotic." In his *History of Rhode Island*, which appeared in 1860, Mr. Arnold in his account of the battle of Rhode Island,<sup>1</sup> relates: "It was in repelling these furious onsets, that the newly-raised black regiment under Colonel Greene distinguished itself by deeds of desperate valor. Posted behind a thicket in the valley, they three times drove back the Hessians, who charged repeatedly down the hill to dislodge them; and so determined were the enemy in these successive charges, that the day after the battle the Hessian colonel, upon whom this duty had devolved, applied to exchange his command and go to New York, because he dared not lead his regiment again to battle, lest his men should shoot him for having caused them so much loss." Mr. Arnold does not give his authorities for these statements, unless we find them in certain conversations with aged men, held by him in 1849, some seventy years after the events, concerning this campaign. In 1878, upon the occasion of the Centennial celebration of the battle of Rhode

1. *Arnold's Hist. R. I.*, vol. 2, p. 427.



Island, Mr. Arnold in his Oration makes use of the following language:<sup>1</sup> "And now it was that the newly-raised black regiment, under Colonel Christopher Greene, justified the hopes of its leaders and contributed in no small degree to decide the fortunes of the day. Headed by their Major, Samuel Ward, and posted in a grove in the valley, they three times drove back the Hessians, who strove in vain to dislodge them, and so bloody was the struggle that on the day after the battle the Hessian colonel<sup>2</sup> who had led the charge applied for a change of command, because he dared not lead

1. R. I. Hist. Tract, No. 6, p. 27.

2. Malsburg was the commander of the regiment of Hessians in question. From his journals an account of this battle has been published. A portion of it appeared in Tract Number Six of this series, and in connection with these paragraphs, it forms curious reading. He says: "The Hessians now rushed up the hill under a heavy fire in order to take the redoubt. Here they experienced a more obstinate resistance than they expected. They found large bodies of troops behind the works and at its sides, chiefly wild looking men in their shirt sleeves, and among them many negroes." Finally, he says, superior numbers obliged him to fall back to Turkey Hill; it was 4 P. M.; he had been under fire from 7 A. M. His loss was four killed and fifteen wounded. It must be confessed this is a rather different account from some of those preceding it. However, if we may credit the accounts given by Arnold, these terrible fellows had such an effect upon poor Malsburg, that he asked at once to be removed to some other quarter of the country where the people had not yet learned to raise black regiments, and fighting was consequently less dangerous



his regiment again to action, lest his men should shoot him for causing them so great a loss." Mr. Greene, the latest writer on Rhode Island history, says: "Yet one great step was taken at the suggestion of General Varnum. Colonel Christopher Greene, Lieutenant-Colonel (Jeremiah) Olney and Major (Samuel) Ward were sent home to enlist a battalion of negroes for the Continental service. When the question came before the Assembly in the form of a resolution to enroll slaves, compensate their masters and give them freedom, it met with some opposition upon the ground that it would be disapproved of in other States; that the masters would not be satisfied with the compensation, and that there were not slaves enough to make a regiment. But the wiser opinion prevailed, the regiment was raised, and when the day of trial came, the freedman proved himself an excellent soldier."<sup>1</sup>

Mr. George Livermore,<sup>2</sup> in his elaborate Historical

1. Greene's Short Hist. R. I., p. 234, Prov., 1877.

2. An Historical Research respecting the opinions of the founders of the Republic on negroes as slaves, as citizens, and as soldiers, by George Livermore; 5th edition, p. 117, Boston, 1863.



Research, says: "Nowhere in the country was the question of negro soldiers more carefully considered or the practice of employing them more generally adopted than in Rhode Island. Not only were the names of colored men entered with those of white citizens on the rolls of the militia, but a distinct regiment of this class of persons was formed. The character and conduct of that regiment have an important place in the history of the Revolutionary war."

With this extract, than which it would be difficult in ten lines to present a more incorrect account, this section of this Tract is closed.



THE LAWS  
UNDER  
WHICH THE SLAVES WERE ENLISTED, WITH DOCUMENTS  
CONCERNING THEIR SERVICE.

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The legislation under which these slaves were made soldiers, and then freemen, has heretofore been so incorrectly represented, that it becomes necessary to re-state it. Large quotations from the laws have been made, being considered far better than any summary of them could be. In February, 1778: "The enemy, with a great force, having taken possession of the capital<sup>1</sup> and a great part of the State," the General Assembly passed an act which was based on a proposal made by General

1. This word "capital" appears in the law, in the singular number, as here given; of course Newport is the place referred to. This would indicate, provided there was no typographical error, that Providence was not considered one of the capitals of Rhode Island at that time.



Varnum to Washington<sup>1</sup> to "inlist into the two battalions raising by this State such slaves as should be willing to enter into the service." The conditions were: "That every able-bodied *negro*, mulatto or

1. Washington's letter to Governor Cooke (R. I. Col. Rec., vol. 8, p. 640) was written January 2, 1778; he says: "Enclosed you will find a copy of a letter from General Varnum to me upon the means which might be adopted for completing the Rhode Island troops to their full proportion in the Continental army. I have nothing to say in addition to what I wrote the 29th of the last month on this important subject, but to desire that you will give the officers employed in this business all the assistance in your power." The letter referred to as having been written on the 29th of December, 1777, is not to be found in the State archives. The letter from General Varnum, of which a copy was enclosed, is as follows: "The two battalions from the State of Rhode Island being small, and there being a necessity of the State's furnishing an additional number to make up their proportion in the Continental army, the field officers have represented to me the propriety of making one temporary battalion from the two, so that one entire corps of officers may repair to Rhode Island in order to receive and prepare recruits for the field. *It is imagined that a battalion of negroes can be easily raised there.* Should that measure be adopted or recruits obtained upon any other principle, the service will be advanced. The field officers who go upon this command are Colonel Greene, Lieutenant-Colonel Olney and Major Ward." (R. I. Col. Rec., vol. 8, p. 641.) The law relates that Washington hath enclosed a proposal made to him by Brigadier-General Varnum to enlist into the two battalions raising by the State such slaves as were willing to enter the service, and Arnold's Hist. R. I., vol. 2, p. 414, says: "The Assembly acting upon the suggestion of Varnum, approved by Washington, resolved to raise a regiment of slaves."



*Indian* man<sup>1</sup> slave in this State may inlist into either of the said two battalions to serve during the continuance of the war with *Great Britain*; that every slave so inlisting shall be entitled to, and receive all the bounties, wages and encouragements allowed by the Continental Congress to any soldier inlisting into their service; that every slave so inlisting shall, upon passing muster before Colonel Christopher Greene, be immediately discharged from the service of his master or mistress and be absolutely FREE, as though he had never been incumbered with any

1. A resolution was passed by the General Assembly in March, 1675-6: "That noe Indian in this Collony be a slave, but only to pay their debts or for their bringinge up, or custody they have received, or to performe covenant as if they had been countrymen not in warr" R. I. Col. Rec., vol. 2, p. 535. An act was passed in 1715 prohibiting the importation of Indian slaves into this Colony, because they had been guilty of sundry very serious crimes committed in this and the neighboring colony, to wit, conspiracies, insurrections, rapes and thefts, and because the increase of their number discourages the immigration of white servants. This law can be found in all the Folio Digests. In 1730 a law was passed to prevent Indians being abused; the preamble to this law relates that "Several evil minded persons in this Colony, of a greedy and covetous design, often draw Indians into their debts by selling them goods at extravagant rates, and get the said Indians to be bound to them for a longer time than is just or reasonable, to the great hurt and damage of the Indians, and to the dishonour of the Government." Acts and Laws of His Majesty's Colony of Rhode Island, p. 219, Newport, 1730. This law can be found in all the subsequent Folio Digests.



kind of servitude or slavery. And in case such slave shall, by sickness or otherwise, be rendered unable to maintain himself, he shall not be chargeable to his master or mistress, but shall be supported at the expense of the State." As a compensation to the owners of such slaves as enlisted, the State agreed to pay<sup>1</sup> "for every such slave so inlisting a sum according to his worth, not exceeding a hundred and twenty pounds for the most valuable slave and in proportion for a slave of less value." This money for the slave was not to be paid unless the owner of the slave surrendered with his chattel the clothes which the slave had worn. A commission of five men,<sup>2</sup> one from each coun-

1. Here may be noted an error in the index to Mr. Bancroft's History of the United States. It says the masters of these slaves were compensated by Congress. This is not the case, the masters were paid for their slaves by the State of Rhode Island. Bancroft's Hist. U. S., Centenary ed., vol. vi, p. 606.

2. This Commission was composed of the following gentlemen: Thomas Rumriel of Newport, Samuel Babcock of South Kingstown, Christopher Lippitt of Cranston, Thomas Tillinghast of East Greenwich, and Josiah Humphrey of Barrington. Samuel Babcock was one of the signers to the Protest against the passage of the Law.

#### THOMAS RUMRIEL

was member of the General Assembly from Newport, 1777, 1778, 1780, 1782,  
—Newport had no representation in 1779—was member of the Council of War,



ty, was appointed to "examine the slaves who shall be so enlisted after they shall have passed muster, and to set a price upon each slave according to his value as aforesaid." This being done, the officer enlisting the slave was to deliver a "certificate

1778-1779. He was selected to solicit aid for those driven from Newport, and also to inquire into the conduct of suspected persons; one of a committee to "settle and adjust" the accounts of staff officers of the line; a committee raised in 1784 on the request of Lieut. Col. Jeremiah Olney. In May, 1784, made one of the "Intendants of Trade" (or Naval Officers) of the State; his appointment was for Newport. Elected State Auditor of Accounts in 1788, and the same year was elected by the Freemen of Newport one of a committee to instruct the delegates in the Assembly to vote for a convention to adopt the Constitution of the United States.

Intendants of Trade were naval officers appointed, one each for the ports of Newport, Providence, Bristol and East Greenwich. Their duties consisted of granting registers, entering and clearing vessels, and other matters relating to commerce and navigation. Some phrases in this act are so curious that they seem worthy of reproduction: "Whereas, it is expedient that the Governor of this State should be clothed with such powers as he may appear with respectability agreeable to the constitution of the State, and for the purpose of granting \* \* \* as an appendage to said office of Governor \* \* \* towards their decent support, and as some compensation for the burthen of said office, \* \* \* it is enacted that His Excellency shall be fully authorized and empowered to have the direction and government of all matters and things relative to trade and commerce; \* \* \* he shall appoint a Surrogate or Deputy under his Sign Manual to do, act, and transact all and every matter and thing pertaining to said office, and receive therefor the same fees. For the actions of these Surrogates or Deputies, their mis-seazance, non-feasance, and malfeazance, the Governor for the time being shall be liable," &c. Acts and Resolves R. I. Gen. Assem., May, 1787, p. 8.



to the master or mistress of the *negro*, mulatto or *Indian* slave, which shall discharge him from the service" of his former owner. Thereupon the General Treasurer was "empowered and directed to give unto the owner of the slave, his promissory note, as Treasurer aforesaid, for the sum of money at which the slave be valued as aforesaid, payable on demand, with interest at the rate of six per cent. per annum." These notes were to be paid with the

#### JOSIAH HUMPHREY.

For more than a century some person bearing this name was more or less intimately connected with public affairs in the Colony and State of Rhode Island. The person under consideration became a member of the General Assembly from Warren in 1757, which town he represented in the years 1758, 1759, 1760. Upon the incorporation of Barrington out of the town of Warren in 1770, Mr. Humphrey became a resident of the former, and in 1771 was sent to represent the town in the Assembly, and again for the years 1771, 1778, 1785, 1786. He held many public offices, among them, Justice of the Court of Common Pleas from 1776 to 1781. Committee to hunt up war supplies, and a Solicitor of the Loan Office.

#### THOMAS TILLINGHAST

was born at East Greenwich, August 21, 1742. He was a member of the General Assembly in 1772, 1773, 1778, 1779, 1780. He was Judge of the Court of Common Pleas in 1779, and in 1780 became one of the Judges of the Superior Court; from this position he was driven by his participation in the decision of the Court in the case of *Trevett v. Weeden*, in 1787. For an account of this event, see R. I. Hist. Tract No. 8, pp. 121-127. Judge Tillinghast died at East Greenwich, August 26, 1821. He served his State faithfully in many positions.



money which was due the State and which was expected from Congress.<sup>1</sup>

Against the passage of this law, six members of the General Assembly recorded their protest.<sup>2</sup> The grounds of this protest were: First,

#### CHRISTOPHER LIPPITT

was born in Cranston, R. I., in 1744 or 1745. In 1756, at the early age of 22 years, he was sent to represent his town in the General Assembly. In 1773 he was again a member of the Assembly and a colonel in the militia. In 1776 he was made a Colonel of the Second Regiment in the Colony's Brigade, the first troops raised by Rhode Island in the war of the Revolution. He was under Colonel Hitchcock at Prospect Hill, near Cambridge and Boston. He soon entered the Continental service, and was in constant service during the time for which his regiment was enlisted. His regiment fought at the battles at Harlem, White Plains, Trenton and Princeton. It formed the Picquet Guard the night before the battle at White Plains. In February, 1777, he returned to his farm in Cranston, his term of enlistment having expired on the 18th of January preceding. He was immediately sent by his town to the General Assembly, serving during the years 1777, 1778, 1779. In 1780 he was made a Brigadier General of Militia by the State, which position he retained for several years. He early espoused the cause of the colonies, and was a firm and brave supporter throughout the struggle. He died at Cranston, June 18, 1824.

1. In October, 1778, the General Treasurer was directed by the General Assembly to pay these notes, and also to pay in cash such of the owners as had not received the notes, on the production of their certificates of appraisal. The amount so paid was £9,958, and interest on the same, £479 7s. 7d.; total, £10,437 7s. 7d.

2. John Northup, James Babcock, Jun., Othniel Gorton, George Peirce, Sylvester Gardner, Samuel Babcock, were the six members protesting. Short biographical notices of them follow.



Because there were not a sufficient number of negroes in the State who would enlist and could pass muster to form a regiment; that the raising of several companies of blacks would not answer the purpose intended, and therefore the

JOHN NORTHUP

was a member of the General Assembly, in continuous service from 1769 to 1781, the last year as Senator. In 1773-6 he was one of the Committee of Safety, the obtaining and paying soldiers and the receiving and distributing of arms were among the duties of his office; in the exercise of these duties he received and disbursed large sums of money. He served as one of the Judges of the Court of Common Pleas from 1776 to 1781, and he was one of those appointed by the General Assembly to receive the women and children sent by the British from Newport, and if they had certain relatives in the State or Continental service, to support them at the expense of the State; if they had friends liable for their support, to send them to such friends; but if they were poor and without friends they were not to be received.

JAMES BABCOCK, JUNIOR,

was admitted a freeman from Westerly in 1753. He became a Major of Militia in 1766. When the army of observation was raised in 1775, Babcock was given the position of Lieutenant-Colonel in Varnum's Regiment. These troops were the first raised by the Colony in the war of the Revolution, and served near Cambridge, Mass. In 1777 he represented Westerly in the Assembly, and was appointed to advance the moneys given as bounties to recruits. He served the State in various other positions.

GEORGE PEIRCE

was elected a freeman in 1757. He was one of those appointed to take the census of 1774. Represented the town of Exeter in the General Assembly in 1775, 1776, 1778. He was a Lieutenant-Colonel of Militia, and served the State in various ways, in taking a census of men capable of bearing arms, in looking up munitions of war, and in removing stock from Block Island.



attempt to constitute a regiment would prove abortive and be a fruitless expense to the State. Second, The opinion would go abroad that the State had purchased a band of slaves to defend the Rights and Liberties of the country. Those soldiers would be

#### OTHNIEL GORTON

was a member of the General Assembly from Warwick during the years 1757, 1758, 1759, 1779, 1780, 1786, 1787. In 1761 Mr. Gorton, in connection with Stephen Hopkins and Job Bennett, Esquires, was directed to prepare a reply to the questions which had been proposed by the Lords' Commissioners of the Plantations. He served on the Committee to inquire into the conduct of suspected persons. He served as Speaker of the House in 1787, and this same year was one of the Committee to draft a letter to Congress, showing the reasons why Rhode Island sent no delegation to the Convention at Philadelphia. In June, 1788, Mr. Gorton resigned his position in the Assembly, and became Chief Justice of the Superior Court, which position he retained until May, 1791.

#### SYLVESTER GARDNER

was admitted a freeman in 1757. He became connected with the militia in 1769 and 1770, and held the rank of Major. He was a member of the Assembly in 1775, 1776, 1778, 1780, 1781; Senator in 1782, 1783, 1784. In 1781 he was elected a Judge of the Court of Common Pleas, which position he held until 1785. In 1787 he was elected to represent the State in Congress, but his name does not appear on the journals of Congress. In 1790 he again appeared in the Assembly. He served the State in many ways during the Revolutionary war.

#### SAMUEL BABCOCK

was a member of the General Assembly from South Kingstown in 1772, 1776, 1779, 1780. In 1781 he was returned from Hopkinton. He was Judge of the Court of Common Pleas from 1779 to 1784. For his services in valuing these slaves he received the sum of £9 12s., which was paid him in January, 1779.



regarded by the other colonies in a contemptible point of view and not equal to their troops. That the State would not receive the same credit for them as for white soldiers; that the enemy would suspect that we could not procure our own people to oppose them in the field. Third, The expense of purchasing and enlisting the regiment would vastly exceed the expenses of raising an equal number of white men, and at the same time will not have the like good effect. Fourth, Because great difficulties will arise in purchasing the *negroes*, and many of the masters will not be satisfied with *any* of the prices allowed.<sup>1</sup> In May following this act,<sup>2</sup> the General Assembly passed the following resolution: "Whereas by an act of this Assembly *negro, mulatto* and *Indian* slaves belonging to the inhabitants of this State are permitted to enlist into the Continental Battalions ordered to be raised by this State, and are thereupon for ever manumitted and discharged from the service of their masters; and whereas, it is necessary for answering the purposes intended by

1. For both the law and the protest, see Acts and Resolves of the R. I. Gen. Assem., February Session, 1778, p. 14-18.

2. Acts and Resolves R. I. General Assembly, May, 1778, p. 15.



the said act that the same should be temporary; it is therefore voted and resolved, that no *negro*, *mulatto* or *Indian* slave be permitted to enlist into said battalions from and after the tenth day of June next, and that the said act then expire and be no longer in force, anything therein to the contrary notwithstanding." Under these laws the enlistment of slaves was made. The first note<sup>1</sup> given for a slave was dated February 25, 1778. The name of the slave was Cuff Greene, owned by James Greene, son of Will (William Greene, who was then Governor?) The amount of the note was a hundred and twenty pounds, the highest sum allowed by the law. From the date of this first note, to the day of the battle (August 29) there were given by the Treasurer sixty-nine<sup>2</sup> notes for that number of slaves.

1. The list of slaves as given in this Tract has in the margin certain dates. These dates must indicate the times when the Treasurer issued his note for the slave against which the date appears, and not the date of enlistment of the slave, for by the act of May no slave could enlist after June 10, whereas some of the dates are as long after that time as October 14. The case of Dr. Thomas Eyres and his slave Frank, which is related later in this Tract, will illustrate this condition of things. The masters obtained their notes at such times as were convenient for them, without regard to the time when their slaves enlisted.

2. The original list shows seventy names, but the entry of one slave, Britton Saltonstall, appears to have been made twice.



The enlistments were stopped by law on the 10th of June, 1778. There had been enlisted, if the Treasurer's accounts are to be trusted, eighty-eight slaves, or perhaps eighty-nine, as by a subsequent account it may appear.<sup>1</sup>

CONCERNING THE NUMBER OF BLACKS IN THE  
REGIMENT.

Having no access to muster rolls of these men, and being curious to form some estimate of the numbers, we have had recourse to sundry facts to aid in forming a judgment. Mr. Cowell places the number of men in this battalion in January, 1780, seventeen months after the battle, as one hundred and forty-four.<sup>2</sup> He divides them into four companies, and gives their names. These names to a large extent correspond to the names of those for which the Treasurer gave his notes. Some further ideas of their numbers may be gathered from the following items, all of which, however, relate to periods long after the battle. In March, 1780, there were ordered

1. Account audited by John Jenckes, Providence, February 23, 1781. Also, Acts and Resolves, R. I. General Assembly, March Session, 1781, p. 8.

2. Spirit of '76 in Rhode Island, Cowell, p. 186-S, Boston, 1850.



to be delivered to Colonel Christopher Greene for the use of his battalion, one hundred and fifty-five pairs of shoes; in May of the same year, he was supplied with one hundred and five frocks and thirty-three pairs of overalls. In June, 1780, there were ordered for this same battalion two hundred and forty-seven pairs of overalls, for which the sum of twenty-four thousand pounds, lawful money, was appropriated. The battalion were in garrison at Newport at this time. At the end of May, 1780, Colonel Greene received orders from Washington to immediately set his regiment to work making Fascines till further orders. Colonel Greene says that he found in North Kingstown the proper stuff, and took his regiment there for the purpose of doing the work; his order given on that day to the Deputy Quartermaster General was that he "immediately supply the necessary tools for making Fascines for one hundred and thirty men to work with."<sup>1</sup> A month later Washington, notwithstanding his pressing requests to the Governor of Rhode Island for men, writes: "Colonel Greene's Regiment being too small to afford any

1. From Manuscript Letters at the office of the Secretary of State of R. I.



material re-inforcement and being usefully employed where it is at present, I have thought it most advisable for it to remain.”<sup>1</sup> From all these facts the deduction is fair, that with all the additions of nearly two years, their numbers did not exceed a hundred and thirty or a hundred and forty men. The number actually engaged at the battle of Rhode Island did not probably exceed a hundred men ; perhaps it did not reach that number.

#### THEIR SERVICES DURING THE BATTLE.

The night following the battle General Sullivan wrote to the Governor of Rhode Island an account of the action.<sup>2</sup> In it he says : “The enemy then advanced to turn our right under fire of their ships, and endeavored to carry a redoubt a little in front of the right wing. Major-General Greene, who commanded the right wing, advanced upon them with *two or three regiments*, and being *reinforced*, drove them back in great confusion. The enemy repeated

1. Manuscript Letter in the office of the Secretary of State of R. I.

2. The letter bears date August 29, 1778, and is in the office of the Secretary of State of R. I.



the attempt *three times* and were as often repulsed with great bravery, our officers and soldiers behaving with uncommon fortitude, and not giving up an inch of ground through the whole day." Nothing is stated here about the few blacks having repulsed the enemy, but it is expressly stated that General Greene had two or three regiments, and that reinforcements were added to them. This letter corroborates Malsburg's account, an extract from which appears on page six of this Tract. On the day following the battle, to wit, on the 30th August, 1778, Major General Sullivan commanding, issued the following "After orders" to the army: "It having been represented by some persons that the conduct of Colonel Commandant Greene's Regiment was not, in the action yesterday, equal to what might have been expected, and also that Major Ward, who commanded the regiment, was much dissatisfied with their conduct, the General assures the officers and soldiers of that regiment that no person has undertaken to censure their conduct to him, and that upon inquiry from Major Ward and sundry other officers who were with them in action, there was not the least founda-



tion for censure. Doubtless in the heat of action Major Ward might have said something to hurry the troops on to action which, being misinterpreted, gave rise to the report, but from the best information the commander-in-chief thinks that regiment entitled to a proper share of the honor of the day."<sup>1</sup>

#### LAWS AND ENLISTMENTS SUBSEQUENT TO THE BATTLE.

The battalion was for months in garrison at Newport, and while there was a source of much trouble to the officers; a letter written by Brigadier-General Cornell, dated Newport, March 14, 1780, mentions some of the troubles in it. He says: "Many are the difficulties that attend this garrison on account of the soldiers stealing and selling their stolen goods to the inhabitants." In June, 1780,<sup>2</sup> the General Assembly passed an act for raising six hundred and ten men to recruit the Continental Battalions raised by this State. In the law they appointed a committee<sup>3</sup>

1. Manuscript Orderly Book of this Army, in possession of the publisher. Also, R. I. Hist. Tract, No. 6, p. 115.

2. Acts and Resolves, R. I. General Assembly, June Session, 1780, p. 23.

3. This committee consisted of Gen. James M. Varnum, Jabez Bowen and Ezek Hopkins, Esquires.



to wait upon General Heath, and request him to "cause the privates in Colonel Christopher Greene's Regiment to be incorporated into the regiment commanded by Colonel Israel Angell, or otherwise disposed of for the best good of the service, and that Colonel Greene and his officers be appointed to command the men ordered to be raised by this act in a corps separate and entire." This was not done. The two corps were united by act of Congress of October 3, 1780, to take effect on the first of January, 1781, and the command was given to Colonel Greene. Jeremiah Olney was made Lieutenant-Colonel, and Ebenezer Flagg, Major.<sup>1</sup> During the first session in July, 1780, the General Assembly passed a vote requesting General Washington to pardon all the deserters from the troops of this State who "may join their respective corps by a time which he may think proper to fix, and that General Heath be requested to issue a pardon for all the deserters from Colonel Greene's regiment who may join by a time he may think proper to fix." In consequence of this request, Gen. Heath issued an order promising a full

1. Cowell's Spirit of '76 in Rhode Island, p. 216, Boston, 1850.



and free pardon to all deserters at this time absent from the regiment commanded by Colonel Christopher Greene who shall return to their duty in said corps wherever it may be before the first of September next.<sup>1</sup> From a roll of these men, at present in the office of the Secretary of State, containing about five hundred names, it appears that there were sixty-three men classed as either negroes, mulattoes or Indians; of the latter there were twenty-eight and of the former thirty-five. There was nothing in the law prohibiting the employment of them. In this same roll the number of boys of the age of eighteen years and less appears to have been one hundred and sixty. One of these soldiers was fourteen years old.

In July, 1780, General Washington having in the most pressing manner called upon Rhode Island for more men, the General Assembly passed an act<sup>2</sup> for raising six hundred and thirty men for three months service. The law required the towns to provide these men by the first day of the succeeding August.

1. This order is dated Newport, 11th July, 1780, and was printed in the Providence Gazette, July 22, 1780.

2. Acts and Resolves of R. I. General Assembly, second session, July, 1780, p. 28.



This very short notice would give the towns not longer than ten days to obtain the men. In case they did not get them, a draft was provided for in accordance with the urgent request of Washington. To carry out this draft the law designated certain men, who were directed to form the people into classes. They were to have regard to the number of polls and value of estates. These classes were to include all male persons whatsoever of the age of sixteen years and upwards, who had resided for the space of thirty days within their respective towns. Each class was to furnish one able-bodied recruit. From these classes were to be excluded *Deserters*, *Indians*, *mulattoes* and *negroes*. In October, 1780, an act was passed by the General Assembly directing the raising of two hundred and twenty effective men for three years.<sup>1</sup> The six months men<sup>2</sup> in Colonel Greene's Regiment were to be permitted to enlist under this call, and in case they did so were granted a furlough for three months. In No-

1. Acts and Resolves, R. I. Gen. Assem., October session, 1780, p. 13.

2. The slaves were enlisted to serve during the continuance of the war. The men here referred to were those who enlisted for six months under the law of June, 1780.



vember, 1780, an act was passed by the General Assembly for filling up and completing the State's quota in the Continental army. This call required three hundred and eight men. The people were to be formed into classes as before, and each class to furnish a soldier. From these classes the law excluded *Indians*, *mulattoes* and *negroes*.<sup>1</sup> Under these laws the recruiting proceeded. After a few weeks Colonel Greene, with the intention of joining his regiment at headquarters, placed the mustering of recruits in charge of Lieutenant-Colonel Jeremiah Olney, who, on the 4th January, 1781, issued the following order :

"Colonel Greene intending soon to join his Regiment at Head Quarters, mustering the Recruits will therefore fall on Major Flagg at East Greenwich, and myself at Providence, where attendance will be given for that purpose on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday, till the whole are mustered. *Negroes will not be received*, nor any but able-bodied, effective men. Preference should be given as much as possible to those who have served in the Continental

1. Acts and Resolves, R. I. Gen. Assembly, November Session, 1780, p. 37.



army or in the State Battalions. The Head of each class will attend with the Recruit before a Justice of the Peace and have the Oath of Fidelity to the United States administered and certificate on the back of the Inlistment, which must be produced when the Recruit passes muster.”<sup>1</sup>

Colonel Greene proceeded with his regiment to the front, and while encamped at Point Bridge, on the Croton River, was surprised and attacked in the rear by a party of two hundred and sixty of the enemy's light horse during the night of May 14, 1781. Colonel Greene and Major Flagg were killed, and about forty of the regiment were either killed, wounded or taken prisoners. The command devolved upon Lieutenant-Colonel Olney, who retained it during the remainder of the war.<sup>2</sup>

In February, 1782,<sup>3</sup> the General Assembly passed an act for raising two hundred and fifty-nine men to make full the quota of this State's forces in the army of the United States. The people were to be formed into classes as had been done before, and those

1. Providence Gazette, January 10, 1781.

2. Arnold's Hist. R. I., vol. 2, p. 470.

3. Acts and Resolves R. I. Gen. Assembly, February session, 1782, p. 9.



classes were to send the soldiers required. Lieutenant-Colonel Olney, who was then in Rhode Island for the purpose of obtaining the men which were needed, issued the following order :

"The Honorable General Assembly having at their last session ordered this State's Continental Battalion completed to the Establishment, the subscriber informs the public that constant attendance will be given by Captain Brown at East Greenwich, and himself at the State House in Providence, for receiving and mustering the recruits. *It has been found from long and fatal experience that Indians, negroes and mulattoes do not (and from a total want of Perseverance and Fortitude to bear the various Fatigues incident to an army cannot) answer the public service, they will not therefore on any account be received.* Experience also confirms how little reliance we can place on Foreigners who, not being interested in the event of the present important contest, mean only to be soldiers of fortune; and no sooner do they riot away their bounties, or meet with uncommon fatigues in the field, than they seek the earliest opportunity shamefully to desert



the service they solemnly engaged to remain in. To avoid future imposition of this sort, none will be received except those who have served Three Years or upwards in the Continental army and can produce an honorable discharge, or such as are lawfully married and have resided Three Years or more within this State. The inhabitants of this State, and particularly those who have seen regular service should be preferred to any other description. The period being short for which the recruits are to be engaged, it is of the first importance to the service to have men equal in every respect, in size, and ability of body to discharge all the duties of a soldier. Should any be presented for mustering that do not answer this description they will be rejected. Inlistments will be furnished for each recruit on application.”<sup>1</sup>

In explanation of his order, Lieutenant-Colonel Olney wrote to Washington that “The service having suffered greatly the last year through designing men imposing improper persons on us for soldiers,

1. This order is signed Jeremiah Olney, Lieutenant-Colonel Commandant and dated Providence, March 8, 1782. It may be found in the Providence Gazette, March 9, 1782.



I have therefore endeavored as far as it comes within my reach to guard against the like imposition in the future.”<sup>1</sup> With these significant orders this section of this Tract is ended.

1. Manuscript Letter dated Providence, March 19, 1782, in the office of the Secretary of State.



SOME MEMORANDA  
CONCERNING  
THE PRECEDING SECTIONS OF THIS TRACT.

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THE first section is devoted to the presentation of the views advanced at various times by former writers, concerning the slave soldiers from Rhode Island. In the second section appear the laws which relate to the formation of the battalion, for it was never a regiment, and sundry documents concerning its service as soldiers. It remains only to examine the statements embodied in the first, in connection with the facts presented in the second; to this purpose is devoted the present section.

The law under which the negroes enlisted was enacted in February, 1778. In the preamble to the law the legislature declared that their law grew out of a proposal made by Brigadier-General Varnum to Washington, and which the latter had forwarded to



Rhode Island, to "enlist into the two battalions raising by this State such slaves as should be willing to enter into the service." Arnold goes still further. He says: "The Assembly acting upon the suggestion of Varnum,<sup>1</sup> approved by Washington, resolved to raise a regiment of slaves." The letters of both Washington and Varnum appear on page ten of this Tract. Varnum says nothing whatever about slaves. The only reference to negroes, either freemen or slaves, in his letter are the words: "It is imagined that a battalion of negroes can be easily raised there." Washington's letter is still less definite. He merely

1. Gen. James M. Varnum was born at Dracut, Mass., 1749. He became a student in Rhode Island College, and was one of the first graduates. After his graduation he taught a classical school, and studied mathematics. He became a law student in the office of Oliver Arnold, Esq., was admitted to the bar in 1771, established himself at East Greenwich, but his talents soon acquired for him an extensive practice throughout the Colony and State. At the breaking out of the war he marched his Company, the Kentish Guards, at once for the scene of action. In 1776, Rhode Island raised two regiments, one of which Varnum commanded. Towards the close of the year he was placed in command of a brigade by Washington. Needing new recruits he sent Varnum home to obtain them. In February, 1777, Congress gave him the rank of Brigadier-General, which fact was communicated to him by a personal letter from Washington himself. It was under Gen. Varnum's command that the gallant defence of Forts Mercer (or Red Bank) and Mifflin, on Mud Island, was conducted. These posts were situated, the first on the left bank of the Delaware river, and



## THE BLACK REGIMENT OF THE REVOLUTION. 35

says he encloses Varnum's letter and urges the Governor to give the officers employed, all the assistance in his power, to the end that Rhode Island could complete her quota. The statement that Varnum proposed to purchase and set into the field a regiment of slaves, and that that idea was approved by Washington, does not seem to be warranted by the language of either writer. In regard to the use of the language in the preamble, there is this to be said: The legislature which enacted the law was an expiring one. A new election would follow in April. Their lease of life would continue not longer than six or

the second upon an island opposite. The immediate defence of the first devolved upon Col. Greene, and of the second upon Major Simeon Thayer. They were erected to retard the advance of the British army on Philadelphia. Gen. Varnum continued in active service in 1778, commanding a brigade under Sullivan at the battle of Rhode Island. He resigned his commission in 1779, and was sent by Rhode Island as one of her representatives to the Continental Congress, 1780-82, and again, 1786-7. At the close of the war, Gen. Varnum resumed the practice of the law at East Greenwich. His last great legal effort was his defence of Weeden, in the case *Trevett v. Weeden*, and of the Judges before the General Assembly for their Judgment. In 1787 Congress established the northwest Territory, and made Gen. Varnum one of the Judges of the Courts for the Territory. The following spring of 1788, Gen. Varnum left Rhode Island, and took up his residence at Marietta, Ohio, where he died January 10, 1789. These details are condensed from the biography of Varnum, by Updike, Mem. R. I. Bar, pp. 145-233, Boston, 1842.



seven weeks. They were in doubt as to the way in which the people would receive such a radical law, and they took occasion to shield themselves behind great names; besides this excuse for the passage of the law they used arguments to convince the people of the justice and wisdom of the measure. The election was held, and in a list of members numbering sixty-three in both branches of the legislature, thirty-nine were new members. This was not an unprecedented change, but it was a very great one, and it proves that the people were earnestly interested about something.

One of the earliest acts of the new legislature was to repeal the law which permitted the enlistment of slaves, and to declare that the enlistment of slaves was never intended to be other than a temporary measure. It in fact was in force as a law of Rhode Island less than four months. This can in no sense be called the settled policy of the State. Can any writer with a proper regard to historic accuracy say that "nowhere in the country was the question of negro soldiers more carefully considered, or the practice of employing them more generally adopted than in Rhode Island?"



The entire number of slaves purchased, as appears by the lists of the General Treasurer, was eighty-eight. Two slaves not on those lists appear in this Tract, thus swelling the number to ninety men. To this small number it may be necessary to add some free negroes that possibly may have enlisted. If this is necessary, it would increase the strength of the battalion to that extent. It is not probable that the number engaged in the battle exceeded the estimate in a former section, where this matter of numbers has received some attention. The enlistments of these men were for the war; whoever enlisted, remained enlisted; the losses must be mainly by casualties in battle or by desertion. From the former cause there could be no loss, for they were in no engagement after the battle of Rhode Island, and previous to May, 1780, when Colonel Greene called for tools for one hundred and thirty men with which to make fascines, and Washington said there were in the battalion too small a number to order out of the State. From the latter cause, desertion, there was continual loss, as the newspapers of the day record, and the action of the General Assembly verifies.



Concerning the behavior of this battalion at the battle of Rhode Island many pleasant things have been written. Some of them may be seen by reference to the first section of this Tract. They are mainly written by men who were neither eye-witnesses nor actors in the scenes which they described, they simply wrote what others told them. This is tradition.

The story about their having three times repulsed the Hessians cannot be true. That they were among those who assisted in resisting the Hessians, there can be no question. Sullivan in his letter to the Governor, quoted on page twenty-two, preceding, says Major-General Greene, with two or three regiments, advanced to defend this redoubt, which was situated a little in front of the right wing, but it required a reinforcement of two Continental battalions to the three regiments which Greene already had to enable him to maintain his ground. All credit for work which it took four or five regiments to accomplish, appears to have been given to a couple of companies of undisciplined negroes. Sullivan continues: "The enemy repeated the attempt *three*



*times*, and were as often repulsed." In the light of these documents how can it be said that this little band of negroes did what they are alleged to have done in defence of this post, and that but for their heroic defence the "entire army would have been captured," as one writer has stated.

Had they done such deeds of *desperate valor* as they are represented to have done, would it have been necessary for Sullivan to have issued a General Order on the day following the battle for the purpose of re-establishing the reputation of the battalion? Stories were rife in the camp of their *lack* of valor, but Sullivan says, "Nobody has censured them to him; doubtless Major Ward might have said something in the heat of action to hurry them on to action," but this had been "misinterpreted and gave rise to the report." Then he very carefully says he "thinks that regiment entitled to a *proper* share of the honor of the day."

In June and July, 1780, large calls were made for men to serve in the Continental battalions from Rhode Island. The law which provided for the call in June does not mention negroes or Indians, either



slaves or freemen ; but in the law of July they were expressly prohibited from entering or being enrolled in the classes which the law provided should be formed, and from which recruits were to be drafted. Free negroes, however, could enlist under both calls, and the result appears on page twenty-six, preceding, where it appears that in a roll of five hundred recruits, thirty-five were negroes or mulattoes, and twenty-eight were Indians. There is no *tradition* in these facts, they are all based on written or printed documents. How in the light of such facts can any writer of history affirm that "not only were the names of colored men entered with those of white citizens on the rolls of the militia, but a distinct regiment of this class of persons was formed?"

Severe penalties were imposed for enlisting slaves. In March, 1781, a charge was brought against Andrew Craige<sup>1</sup> for having induced a negro, who was a slave, to enlist. A committee reported in May that the class in Coventry, whereof Caleb Vaughan was the head, had agreed with Craige to supply a recruit for them, for which they had given a note to Craige,

1. Acts and Resolves, R. I. Gen. Assem., March, 1781, p. 40.



and also had paid a negro a hundred dollars on Craige's order. This negro proved to be a slave, and was discharged. The money he had received was taken away from him, and also the breeches and jacket and other things with which he had been supplied. Craige was ordered to supply within ten days a suitable man, and his estate was held liable for the costs and charges in case he failed to comply with the order. Craige transferred his estate to other parties, which the Assembly declared their belief was in fraud. The claim of the State was three hundred silver dollars. The estate was ordered to be sold by the sheriff, and in case no one bid for it, the sheriff was ordered to buy it for the State. Finally another committee was raised, who reported that in their opinion Craige did not know at the time of his enlisting the recruit, that he was a slave, and that the slave was dismissed without any notice having been given Craige or to the class which he represented; and they recommended the discharge of Craige upon his payment of such costs as had arisen. This was done.

In all subsequent legislation the same practice was



followed, and neither negroes, mulattoes, nor Indians, whether slaves or freemen, were allowed to be enrolled. In January, 1781, Lieut.-Col. Jeremiah Olney, than whom no better nor braver soldier ever trod the soil of Rhode Island, was in Providence for the purpose of enlisting men to fill the Continental battalions. Notwithstanding the urgency of the need for men, he declares in his call that negroes will not be received. Colonel Greene was then in Providence with him. The following year Lieutenant-Colonel Olney came again for men. Colonel Greene and Major Flagg<sup>1</sup> had been killed, and Lieutenant-

1. In May, 1775, the General Assembly ordered two vessels to be chartered and equipped to protect the trade of the Colony. Ebenezer Flagg was made quartermaster of one of these vessels. He must soon have left here, for at the next session he was made a Captain of one of the Companies of the Army of Observation, and in this capacity must have served at Prospect Hill. In 1776, he was made a Captain in one of the battalions raised that year. He was among those recommended by Washington for positions in the new Establishment of the Continental Army. In May, 1779, he was recommended by the General Assembly to Congress for promotion to the rank of Major. In July, 1780, being under marching orders, he was provided by the State with two thousand dollars, to pay the expense of transporting the baggage of his troops. He was killed at Croton river during the night of May 14, 1781. A small detachment of British light horse, comprising 260 men, made a sudden assault on the rear of the regiment, taking them by surprise. Col. Greene was killed at the same time, and about forty privates killed or captured.



Colonel Olney was the Commandant. In his call he declares that negroes will not be received, that from long and *fatal* experience they have been found *totally unfit* for the life of a soldier. This opinion comes from one of the officers who assisted in the original formation of the battalion. Lieutenant-Colonel Olney was one of the three officers sent home with Washington's letter enclosing Varnum's proposal. Not only had he been with them in every battle but his service began months and even years before their first engagement. It is the deliberately expressed opinion of a cool and brave commander, whose courage had been tested on many fields. Is it possible in the light of these documents to believe that this battalion "justified the hopes of its leaders" or that the "freedman proved himself an excellent soldier"?

Concerning the Protest against the formation of the battalion, a summary of which appears in the preceding section, one writer says: "The difficulties which they (the protesting members) apprehended were not found to exist to such an extent as to defeat the project"; another affirms, "the wiser



opinion prevailed, the regiment was raised and when the day of trial came, the freedman proved himself an excellent soldier." Of the four grounds of this protest, at least three proved to be founded upon the soundest judgment, and the event proved their justness. First—There were never found enough men to constitute a regiment. Second—The attempt did prove abortive. Third—That the expense was very much greater than white men could be obtained for, the eighty-eight men costing upwards of ten thousand pounds more than white men would have cost; and Fourth—There were great difficulties and uneasiness in the matter of purchasing. The Assembly, upon the petition of the owners of a slave who had been made free by his enlistment under their laws, actually discharged the soldier and made him a slave again. His owners were not satisfied with the operation of the law. This is the case of a slave named Prince, related in a subsequent portion of this Tract.

It cannot be truly said that these protesters "defeated the project," for the law was enacted notwithstanding the protest, but it can scarcely be consid-



ered that the "wiser opinion prevailed," since the whole project was a total failure.

The terms used in describing the services of the blacks in the engagement on Rhode Island seem so extravagant when compared with the losses on either side that we cannot forbear grouping them: "Thrice they rushed on the banded force of British and Hessians." "It was in repelling these furious onsets that the newly raised black regiment under Colonel Greene distinguished itself by deeds of desperate valor." "So bloody was the struggle," &c. "Three times were they attacked with most desperate valor and fury," &c. Malsburg was in command of the assaulting party of Hessians, he reports a loss of four men killed and fifteen wounded; on the American side the loss is given as three men killed, nine wounded and eleven missing. It must be remembered that the casualties are always greater in the party assaulting than in the party defending, stationed as they are behind works. This may account for the disparity between the two sides, Malsburg having lost one more man than the defenders.



Having considered in a general way these affairs, it remains to consider some of the minor details. Being isolated statements, they must from the necessity of the case be somewhat disconnected.

Among the supplies for these negroes we find frocks, overalls and shoes. In the case of overalls the State expended (or appropriated) at a single purchase twenty-four thousand pounds. We find nothing for "plumes with tips of white." Malsburg says when he reached the walls of the redoubt he found large bodies of troops, *chiefly* wild looking men in their shirt sleeves, and among them many negroes. He makes no mention of "plumes tipped with white," and it hardly seems probable that these negroes were arrayed in such style, while it is certain their white compatriots were in their shirts and pantaloons only.

The statement made by Tristram Burges is exactly the reverse of the fact. He said, "not one of them was permitted to be a soldier until he had first been made a freeman"; exactly the reverse is the fact. Not one of them was made free until he had first been mustered into the battalion and was a Continental soldier.



The praise awarded the "black regiment" by Governor Eustis for their defence of Redbank is entirely fictitious. The defence of Redbank took place October 22, 1777. The "black regiment" was enlisted and purchased in the following year. The act under which their enlistments were made was passed in February, 1778. This certainly is a sufficient answer.

Concerning the statements made in relation to the affair at Croton river, when Colonel Greene was killed, but not until his faithful guard of blacks had to a man been massacred, let us examine the facts: The attack was a surprise, by a few cavalry made in the night upon the rear of the battalion; had this "faithful guard of blacks" been attending to their duty they would not have been surprised. In June preceding the death of Colonel Greene, a law was enacted for raising men to recruit the battalions commanded by Colonel Greene and Colonel Angell. A committee was appointed, doubtless at the request of Colonel Greene, to visit General Heath and ask him to put the men which had formed the command of Colonel Greene (this "black regiment") into the



battalion commanded by Colonel Angell, and to give the command of the new recruits to Colonel Greene. Had the success of the project of raising a regiment of slaves been such as to justify the hopes of its leaders, why did they, taking the first opportunity, endeavor to be relieved of such faithful guards by having them transferred to another command.

Colonel Greene had been in command of these desperate fighters nearly two years, he was about to enter into a more active service, would he have selected a personal guard from this body of men from which he was trying to be relieved? How came he to have a personal body guard at all? These men had been made the menials of their officers to such an extent that the General Assembly were obliged to pass an act prohibiting such abuses.<sup>1</sup> This might not have prohibited their being made into personal guards, however. Cowell places these blacks in four companies, gives their names and numbers, the names correspond with those with which we are familiar, they number one hundred and forty-four men. Arnold informs us the loss in

1. Acts and Resolves, R. I. Gen. Assembly, September, 1780, p. 6.



the affair was forty men killed, wounded and missing. How then is it possible to believe that the sabres of the troopers reached Colonel Greene "only through the bodies of his faithful guard of blacks as they hovered over him to protect him and every one of whom was killed."

In what battle they lost half their number, the writer of the paragraph unfortunately does not state, and all other histories are equally silent. Our task is done, and our belief is that the freedmen of 1778 as a class did not prove themselves such excellent soldiers as they have heretofore been represented. We are at an utter loss to understand how they succeeded in inspiring the heart of poor Malsburg with such dismay that he immediately, after his first engagement with them, resigned his commission or asked to be transferred, or to be relieved, or did some other desperate thing.

There may have been individual exceptions, in fact there were, for before us lies the certificate signed by Washington, and countersigned by Lieutenant-Colonel Olney, that Cato Varnum had done five years of honorable service in obtaining the inde-



pendence of that country which gave him birth only as a slave.

A consciousness of honesty of purpose and integrity of service certainly must be our best reward. Yet to meet the approbation of those competent to judge is a pleasure to everybody. It therefore can be only a source of regret that in all probability the eyes of this faithful black never rested on this paper, his title deed to the gratitude of his fellow-men, witnessed by the hand of the great leader himself.

LET US GIVE HONOR TO WHOM HONOR IS DUE.



THE TREASURER'S ACCOUNT  
OF THE  
NEGRO SLAVES  
ENLISTED INTO THE CONTINENTAL BATTALIONS,  
TO WHOM  
THEY DID BELONG  
AND THE  
VALUATION OF EACH SLAVE,  
WITH  
NOTES CONCERNING THEM.  
1778.



# STATE OF RHODE ISLAND AND PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS.

AN ACCOUNT OF THE NEGRO SLAVES INLISTED INTO THE CONTINENTAL BATTALIONS AND TO WHOM THEY DID BELONG, WITH THE VALUATION OF EACH SLAVE AND NOTES GIVEN. 1778.

DATE.	NAME OF SLAVE.	OWNER OF SLAVE.	RESIDENCE OF OWNER.	Value of Slave
March 6	Titus Peiree,	William Peiree,	East Greenwich,	£120
" "	Africa Burk,	James Burk,	Providence,	120
" "	Sigby Talbot,	Silas Talbot, Esq.,	"	100
Feb'y 25	Cuff Greene,	James Greene, son of Will,		120
" "	Dick Champlin,	Stephen Champlin,	South Kingston,	120
" "	Jack Champlin,	" "	" "	110
March 31	Backus Hazard,	Robert Hazard,	West Greenwich,	100
April 2	Jack Fones,	Daniel Fones,	North Kingston,	100
" 3	Cudjo Carpenter,	Heirs of Ann Carpenter, widow,	South Kingston,	120
" "	Cesar Wells,	James Wells, Jr.,	Hopkinton,	100
" "	Cuff Gardner,	Christopher Gardner,	South Kingston,	120
" "	Sharper Gardner,	Benjamin Gardner,	" "	120
" "	Prince Hammond,	William Hammond,	North Kingston,	120
" "	Quam Tanner,	Joshua Tanner,	Hopkinton,	120
" "	Prince Bent,	John Bent,	"	120
" 6	Nat Wicks,	John Wicks,	Warwick,	120
" 11	York Champlin,	Robert Champlin,	South Kingston,	120
" 14	Boston Wilbour,	John Wilbour,	Little Compton,	110
" "	John Burroughs,	William Burroughs,	Newport,	110
" "	Eben'r Richmond,	Peres Richmond,	Little Compton,	110
" 20	Priamus Brown,	Gideon Brown,	Johnston,	120



DATE.	NAME OF SLAVE.	OWNER OF SLAVE.	RESIDENCE OF OWNER.	Value of Slave.
April 21	Cato Vernon,	William Vernon,	Newport,	£114
" 23	Isaac Rodman,	Daniel Rodman, Esq.,	South Kingston,	120
" 24	Britton Saltonstall	Dudley Saltonstall,	Westerly,	105
" "	Cato Bours,	John Bours,	Newport,	120
May 8	James Clark,	Gideon Clark,	South Kingston,	120
" "	Mintel Gardner,	Henry Gardner, Esq.,	" "	110
" "	Moses Updike,	Lodowick Updike,	North Kingston,	93
" "	Cesar Updike,	" "	" "	120
" "	Garret Perry,	Benjamin Perry,	South Kingston,	120
" "	Sampson Saunders	Heirs of Stephen Saunders,	Westerly,	90
" "	Ruttee Gardner,	Nicholas Garduer,	Exeter,	30
" "	Ebenezer Gray,	Samuel Gray,	Little Compton,	100
" "	Prince Randal,	Henry Randal,	Cranston,	120
" 22	Thomas Nichols,	Benjamin Nichols,	Warwick,	120
" "	Pero Greene,	Philip Greene, Esq.,	"	90
" "	Jack Greene,	" "	"	65
" 27	Pero Mowry,	Daniel Mowry, Jr., Esq.,	Smithfield,	120
" 28	Juba Smith,	Josiah Smith,	Bristol,	120
" "	Cesar Sheldon,	Palmer Sheldon,	South Kingston,	120
" 29	Bristol Rhodes,	Joseph Rhodes,	Cranston,	120
" "	Fortune Watson,	Samuel Watson,	North Kingston,	120
June 1	Query Sweeting,	Job Sweeting,	Providence,	120
" "	Jack Minturn,	William Minturn,	Newport,	120
" 6	Cesar Rose,	John Rose, Esq.,	South Kingston,	120



DATE.	NAME OF SLAVE.	OWNER OF SLAVE.	RESIDENCE OF OWNER.	Value of Slave.
June 6	Edward Rose,	John Rose, Esq.,	South Kingston,	120
" "	Peter Hazard,	Robt. Harris, son of Rich'd,	" "	110
" "	Priamus Babcock,	Samuel Babcock,	Hopkinton,	£120
" "	David Potter,	Caleb Potter,	Cranston,	120
" 12	Jack Coddington,	John Coddington,	Newport,	120
" 17	Ceasar Harris,	Andrew Harris,	Cranston,	120
" 18	Sharper Champlin,	Christopher Champlin,	Newport,	120
" 22	Richard Rhodes,	Nehemiah Rhodes,	Cranston,	120
" "	Priamus Rhodes,	" "	"	120
" "	Samuel Rhodes,	" "	"	120
July 2	Cyrus Mawney,	Pardon Mawney,	East Greenwich,	120
" "	Prince Rodman,	Robert Rodman, Jr.,	South Kingston,	120
" "	Mingo Rodman,	William Rodman,	" "	110
" 6	Jacob Hazard,	Carder Hazard,	" "	110
" "	Warren Mason,	John Mason,	Warren,	120
" 16	Thomas Lefavour,	Daniel Lefavour,	Bristol,	120
" "	Priamus Gardner,	Nicholas Gardner,	South Kingston,	105
" "	Peter Hazard,	Joseph Hazard,	" "	120
" "	Mingo Robinson,	Sylvester Robinson,	" "	120
" "	William Greene,	Henry Greene,	" "	120
" 18	Cato Greene,	His Excellency Wm. Greene,	Warwick,	120
" "	Cuff Tillinghast,	Benjamin Tillinghast,	West Greenwich,	120
" 31	Prince Vaughan,	Jonathan Vaughan,	North Kingston,	114
Aug. 3	Jabin Hazard,	Robert H. Hazard, Note made to Edward Hull,	Jamestown,	110



DATE.	NAME OF SLAVE.	OWNER OF SLAVE.	RESIDENCE OF OWNER.	Value of Slave.
Sept. 5	July Champlin,	Stephen Champlin,	South Kingston,	£120
" 28	Hercules Gardner,	Ezekiel Gardner,	North Kingston,	60
" "	Philow Phillips,	Christopher Phillips,	" "	120
Oct. 14	Newp't Champlin,	Jeffrey Champlin,	South Kingston,	100

Received the above certificates, together with one for Fisherman Allen valued at £120, together also with those mentioned on the other side of the leaf, to use in the State's account.

R. J. HELME,  
Com'r.

88 notes and certificates, amounting			
to principle,	-	-	-
			£9,958 0 0
Interest paid on ditto,	-	-	
			479 7 7
			<hr/>
			£10,437 7 7

Providence, Feb. 23, 1781.

Audited per

JOHN JENCKES.

In the original record of the preceding list the name of Britton Saltonstall, slave of Dudley Saltonstall, appears to have been entered twice under the same date and for the same amount. In this list it is omitted. The list above is of those only who received notes for their slaves; it numbers seventy-three. A subsequent list contains the owners' names only of both notes and certificates. It contains eighty-nine names. Occasionally another name is found, as in the cases of Remington and Bannister, but the number is very small.



## NOTES.

Fisherman, the slave referred to at the close of the preceding paper, was the property of William Allen. He was enlisted by Capt. Elijah Lewis. After Fisherman had enlisted, and before he was mustered or valued, he deserted to the enemy on Rhode Island. This prevented Allen, his owner, from obtaining a certificate of his value from the commissioners. Whereupon Allen laid his case before the General Assembly. The Assembly directed the Treasurer to give his note to Allen for the amount of £120, and passed a resolution to the effect that if Fisherman should again come into the possession of the State he should be at the disposal of the Assembly. All this seems to have a very ludicrous air. The State, by the authority of the Assembly, had bought a negro slave of his owner, and paid for him. Not having been mustered in, the slave was not made free—but, although a deserter, was still a slave. The Assembly solemnly resolved that their own property should be at their own disposal, provided they ever caught him.



The legislation of these days is sometimes curious, as in the case of Fisherman, just described. Here is another instance : A slave named Prince, who was owned by Joseph Brown and Nicholas Power, both citizens of Rhode Island, was kept by his owners in Grafton, Mass. He came to Rhode Island, where he was owned, and enlisted in Colonel Greene's Battalion, as he had a perfect right under the law to do ; he was mustered in and thereby became an absolutely free man ; but his owners went to the General Assembly for him, whereupon the Assembly resolved that he be discharged from the regiment and be remanded to his former owners. That the clothes and bounty which the slave had received from the State be returned to Colonel Greene, provided they could be had, and the arms and equipments which the slave had (provided he had received any) be returned. On what ground the Assembly could play fast and loose with the freedom of the slave does not quite appear.

Bristol Rhodes, whose name stands in the preceding list under the date of May 29, went in October,



1782, to the General Assembly for relief; he had been discharged from service in the battalion during the preceding month of September as being unfit for duty, having lost a leg and an arm at the siege of York Town. A committee found there was due to him in money thirty-nine pounds, and they further expressed the opinion that he was entitled to relief by monthly payments during the remainder of his natural life, but under the exhausted financial condition of the State they felt obliged to leave that question to the united wisdom of the State. The Assembly resolved to pay him one-half the amount then due him, and the remaining half at the expiration of three months.

In October, 1778, Dr. Thomas Eyres preferred a petition to the General Assembly, stating that his mulatto slave Frank, aged about twenty-three years, had, about eighteen months since, or in April, 1777, enlisted into the Continental Battalion raised by this State, under command of Colonel Greene, to serve during the war. That during the time the act of this State was in force, giving slaves so enlisting



their freedom, and allowing their masters in proportion to their worth, the regiment was on duty to the westward, so that it was not in the Doctor's power, for want of the necessary certificates, to apply for payment for his slave. The Doctor says that Frank (the slave) was esteemed by his officers to be an excellent soldier, and that he (the Doctor) does not object to his remaining in the service on the terms of the act (which was no longer a law), but he wishes to be allowed a reasonable sum for his property. Whereupon the Assembly voted to have the slave valued by the commissioners and a certificate of his value issued to the Doctor, which was accordingly done and Frank was given his freedom.

Another singular order is that which was made by the Council of War, a body which sat during the intermission of the General Assembly. The order relates that a negro man, alleging that he was a slave and owned by Mrs. Lydia Latham, of Groton, Connecticut, had enlisted into Colonel Greene's Regiment, whereupon the Council directed the commissioners to appraise the fellow and issue a certificate



of his value to John Updike, who was thereupon empowered to draw the money at which he was valued, for the alleged owner, Mrs. Latham, but Mr. Updike was required to become security to refund the money in case it afterwards appeared that the negro was not a slave at the time he enlisted. The jurisdiction appears to have been elastic enough in this case to extend into Connecticut and buy a slave on the slave's own statement, but in the case just cited of Prince, the slave returned to slavery from Grafton, the jurisdiction of the General Assembly was evidently too restricted, notwithstanding the owners of Prince were residents of Providence.

The name of Tack Sisson appears in Cowell's muster roll of Captain John S. Dexter's company in 1779.<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Williams in her biography of Colonel Barton, gives the name of Tack Sisson as one of the boat steerers; she says his real name was Jack Sisson.<sup>2</sup> In the preceding pages of her memoir she gives prominence to the name of Guy Watson as being the main negro actor in the exploit of cap-

1. Spirit of '76 in Rhode Island, Cowell, Boston, 1850, p. 189.

2. Williams's Life of Barton, Prov., 1839, p. 127.



turing Barton.<sup>1</sup> In relation to this mixed history, see Rhode Island Historical Tract No. 1, page 36.

Guy Watson was a famous character in the southern portion of Rhode Island during the first third of the present century. He was a frequent visitor to Providence at the celebrations of the Fourth of July, appearing in full regimental costume, singing songs, and telling tales of his old campaigns. Doubtless it was this prominence which has caused so much more to have been written about him than about the other negro soldiers, and which has caused him to be celebrated as the chief actor in many scenes where negroes were concerned. He was not among the slaves purchased by the State; his name appears on the roll of Captain Lewis's company in 1779. He was one of those detached for service in the Oswego Expedition February, 1783, on which occasion he lost several toes from his right foot; he was discharged for inability to serve on the 28th June, 1783. He received a pension from the State on the report of Lieutenant-Colonel Olney. His age in 1786 is given by the latter authority as 33 years; he

1. Williams's Life of Barton, Prov., 1839, p. 48.



died about 1835. In 1832 a company of actors put upon the stage in Providence a play entitled, "The Capture of Prescott," written for the occasion by Sylvester S. Southworth. Guy Watson was the negro character in the play; the part was taken by Mr. McGuire, a distinguished delineator of Ethiopian character.

The Oswego Expedition was probably the last active service of these negro soldiers. In February, 1783, Washington<sup>1</sup> formed a project of attacking the British trading post at Oswego, on Lake Ontario. For this purpose he directed that a portion of the Rhode Island Regiment should be detached, and, together with a body of New York troops numbering about five hundred, placed under the command of Colonel Marinus Willett. The plan was to effect a surprise. Washington's directions were to seize an occasion when sleighing was good, and Oneida lake could be crossed on the ice. An Indian was employed as a guide. After a tedious night march on snow shoes, the detachment found itself at day-

1. Writings of Washington, ed. by Sparks, vol. 8, p. 385, Boston, 1839.



break five miles from the post, and surprise being out of the question, they returned having accomplished nothing.<sup>1</sup> The result was attributed to the treachery or ignorance of the Indian guide, who is said to have lost his way. It was not usual for Indians to lose their way in the woods, but this fellow may have been an exception. This night march was a terrible trial to these negro soldiers; many of them were so badly frost bitten that they were discharged from the service and disabled for life. They were pensioned by the State. The names of these poor disabled soldiers can be found in the Acts and Resolves, February, 1786.

Akraw Remington was a slave owned by Mr. Benjamin Remington; he enlisted into the "Black Regiment." Neither the names of owner nor slave appear in the lists herein given. Cowell's roll presents the name of Jabin Remington, which is possibly the same man. The Assembly ordered the payment of the appraised value of the slave, one hundred and twenty pounds, in June, 1778. Why

1. Oswego fell into the possession of the United States in 1796. See Writings of Washington, ed. by Sparks, vol. 12, p. 66.



this case was treated differently from the others does not appear.

Cato Bannister was a negro slave, owned by the heirs of John Bannister, of Newport. He had been apprenticed to Elkanah Humphrey, of Barrington. He enlisted into the "Black Regiment." His name appears in Cowell's roll, but does not appear in either list as herein given. The reason of this appears to be that by law the owner of an apprenticed slave who enlisted was not to receive the sum at which the slave was appraised, until the expiration of the term of apprenticeship, while his present master was to be paid interest on the valuation of the slave at six per cent. until the same period. Thus, in this case Cato Bannister was appraised at one hundred and five pounds, and Humphrey was from time to time paid the interest on this sum. The State paid the Bannisters for their slave in February, 1785.

Quaco Honeyman was the slave of James Honeyman,<sup>1</sup> of Newport. His name does not appear in any

1. James Honeyman, Esq., attorney at law, died at Newport in February, 1778.



way connected with the "Black Regiment," yet since he was intimately connected with the times and events about which this Tract is written, and his story is so interesting it is inserted: He went before the General Assembly in December, 1781, and stated that he had been the slave of Mr. Honeyman, who was then dead; that while the British were in possession of Newport his master had agreed with Col. Campbell, a British officer, to sell Quaco to him. This arrangement was unsatisfactory to Quaco, and he fled from the Island and put himself under the protection of the authority of the State. That on account of the value of his information concerning the condition of affairs in Newport and all other matters of fact which came to his knowledge, the Council of War permitted him to have his liberty. After the evacuation of Newport, Mr. William Tweedy, the administrator of the estate of Mr. Honeyman, set up a claim on Quaco as a slave, thereupon Quaco came to the Assembly for his freedom. The Assembly ordered matters to stand as they were until their next session, at which Mr. Tweedy was summoned to appear. The following



session, January, 1782, the Assembly declared Quaco to be a freeman, and absolved from all ties of bondage or slavery. They further declared that the information which Quaco had given rendered great and essential service to the State and to the public in general, he having been permitted to pass and repass freely between the island and the main land. Mr. Peterson in his History of Rhode Island, p. 216, gives David P. Hall, Esq., of New York, as authority for the statement: "That Quaco Honeyman, formerly a servant of Rev. James Honeyman, who was at this time a waiter of General Prescott, communicated to Colonel Barton his exact position and accompanied him on the enterprise." The former owner of Quaco had been a lawyer, and therefore could not have been the "Rev."; and second, Mr. Honeyman was probably not a servant to General Prescott. This is a remarkably correct paragraph when its source is considered. Mr. Peterson is not the best authority on Rhode Island history. Quaco may have communicated the information, but it is doubtful if he was present at the capture.<sup>1</sup>

1. Prof. J. Lewis Diman has treated of this affair quite fully in Rhode Island Historical Tract No. 1, page 36.



Ichabod Northup was captured by the British in their night attack, May 14, 1781, at Rhode Island village, on the Croton River, when Colonel Greene was killed. Northup was kept a prisoner until the fall of the year 1783, when he was liberated, came back to Rhode Island, and appealed to the Assembly for his wages. A compromise seems to have been made; his wages were allowed to January, 1782; a note for thirty four pounds, bearing six per cent. interest and having three years to run, was given him. It would be interesting could we know exactly how much money the poor fellow received for his services and when he received it. Until within a very recent period a person bearing this name lived in Providence; he was probably a descendant from this soldier, and a most worthy citizen.

In May, 1791, it came to the knowledge of the Assembly that large numbers of certificates or notes had been procured from the General Treasurer in payment of the balances due the soldiers of the army by means of forged powers of attorney or orders purporting to



have been made by the soldiers to whom the balances were due ; lists and descriptions of these notes were to be obtained, and the loan commissioner cautioned against loaning upon them. Lists were directed to be printed ; one of these lists may be found in the *Newport Mercury* of May 21, 1793, it contains one hundred and six names and amounts in the aggregate to £3200. In this list will be found a large number of the names of the slave soldiers, among them Sharpo Champlin, Bristol Arnold, Ceasar Rose, Cudjo Champlin, Jack Greene, Cato Vernon, Prince Randal, Cato Bannister, Pero Greene, Africa Burk, James McSparran, Cato Bours, Newport Greene, Tack Sisson, whose head was the battering ram on General Prescott's door, and many others.

After the war of the Revolution was over and these negroes returned to civil life, they were frequent applicants to the Assembly either for wages due or for assistance. In June, 1784, the Assembly raised a committee consisting of John Dexter, Archibald Crary and Rowse J. Helme, "to inquire into the particular circumstances of such negroes as were



slaves and enlisted into the Continental army by virtue of an act of this Assembly, and are rendered incapable of maintaining themselves." This committee appear to have never made a report; but another committee was appointed in February of the following year "to draft an act providing for the support and maintenance of such negroes as were freed upon their enlisting into the Continental battalions of this State and have been chargeable." This committee consisted of Henry Marchant, George Champlin and Rowse J. Helme. During the same session they reported an act which became a law. The preamble recites that: "Whereas during the late war it was thought expedient by the legislature to raise a corps to serve in the Continental battalions by inlisting the slaves within this State, and whereas, since disbanding the said corps, many of the said soldiers have become sick and otherwise unable to maintain themselves, and as they have gained no legal place of settlement, it is necessary that provision should be made for their support, and that no particular town should be overburthened with them." The law provided that the town from which the slave en-



listed should provide for his support, with the same economy and frugality that was made use of in the cases of other paupers, and that accounts for the same, if reasonable and just, should be paid by the General Treasury.

John Burroughs was one of those slaves who had enlisted and fought through the war and obtained his freedom. In 1791, while on a voyage to New Orleans, he was there seized and sold as a slave. The knowledge of this outrage came to Lieut.-Colonel Olney, who promptly laid the case with great urgency before the Governor of Rhode Island, at the same time offering such pecuniary assistance as might be required to obtain the freedom of Jack. Unfortunately nothing further is now known of the affair, and whether Jack ever obtained his liberty or not remains an unsettled fact.

In October, 1778, the General Treasurer was directed by the General Assembly to pay the notes and certificates which had been given to the owners of slaves. This was accordingly done. The time of



these payments covered a period extending from November 7, 1778, to November 6, 1779. The list of holders of these securities differs somewhat from the preceding list, it is therefore presented on the two following pages.



## STATE OF RHODE ISLAND.

FOR MONEY PAID FOR NOTES AND CERTIFICATES GIVEN FOR SLAVES  
INLISTED INTO THE CONTINENTAL BATTALIONS.

NAME OF HOLDER.	NUMBER OF NOTES.	NAME OF HOLDER.	NUMBER OF NOTES.
Immanuel Northup, Esq.,	2	James Bourk,	1
Nehemiah Rhodes,	2	William Pearce,	1
His Excellency William Greene,	1	Robert Rodman, Jr.,	1
Caleb Potter,	1	Joseph Shearman,	1
Daniel Mowry, Jr.,	1	William Rodman,	1
Samuel Gardner,	1	John Rose,	1
Christopher Gardner,	1	Samuel Watson,	1
John Bours,	1	Jonathan Vaughan,	1
Dudley Saltonstall,	1	Carder Hazard,	1
Christopher Phillips,	1	Elisha Reynolds,	1
Shearjashub Browne, Esq.,	1	Benja. Nichols,	1
Nehemiah Rhodes,	1	Joseph Hazard,	1
Jeffrey Watson, Esq.,	2	Jona. Browning,	1
John Watson, son of Jeffrey,	1	Joseph Clarke,	1
Jeffrey Watson, Jr.,	1	James Diman,	1
James Greene,	1	Henry Gardner,	1
Philip Greene, Esq.,	2	Daniel Carpenter,	1
Othniel Gorton, Esq.,	1	Richard Sayles,	1
Stephen Arnold, Jr.,	1	Elisha Babcock,	1
Nich. Gardner,	1	Benjamin Gardner,	1
Silas Tulbot,	1	Job Greene,	1



NAME OF HOLDER.	NUMBER OF NOTES.	NAME OF HOLDER.	NUMBER OF NOTES.
John Willbour,	1	William Barton,	2
William Wheaton,	1	Joshua Tanner,	1
William Hammond,	1	Samuel Gray,	1
Lydia Latham,	1	John Hazard,	1
Dr. Thomas Eyres,	1	“ “	1
Edward Hill,	1	William Allen,	1
Henry Greene,	1	John Mason,	1
Christopher Champlin,	1	Gideon Clarke,	1
Stephen Champlin, admin.,	1	Joseph Tillinghast,	1
“ “	2	Thomas Wickes, Esq.,	1
Palmer Sheldon,	1	Daniel Fones,	1
Peres Richmond,	1	John Greene,	1
Nicholas Gardner,	1	Sam'l Babcock, Hopkinton,	1
Thomas Greene,	1	John Bent,	1
Robert Hazard,	1	Andrew Harris,	1
Pardon Mawney,	1	Henry Randal,	1
Henry Tanner,	1	James Watts, Jr.,	1
Hazard Champlin,	4	Paul Allen,	2
Jonathan Hazard,	1	Total,	89



RETURNS AND OTHER TABLES

RELATING TO THE

RHODE ISLAND REGIMENT OF WHICH THE BLACKS  
FORMED A PART,

UNDER THE COMMAND OF

LIEUTENANT-COLONEL JEREMIAH OLNEY, COMMANDANT,

WITH HIS

ORDER DISBANDING THE REGIMENT

ON THE

EXPIRATION OF ITS TERM OF SERVICE.



**REGISTER OF THE OFFICERS IN THE RHODE ISLAND REGIMENT,  
IN JANUARY, '81, WITH THE SUBSEQUENT APPOINTMENTS AND THE CASUALTIES THAT HAVE HAPPENED,  
TO DECEMBER 31ST, 1882, VIZ.:**

NAMES.	RANK.	COMMISSION- ED.	PROMOTED.	RESIGNED.	DEAD.	STAFF APPOINTMENT.	
						WHAT.	WHEN.
Christopher Greene,	Colonel,	1st Jan., '77,			14th May, '81, killed.		
Jeremiah Olney,	Lieut.-Col.	13th Jan., '77,	14th May, '81, Lt. Col. Com.				
Ebenezer Flagg,	Major,	26th May, '78,			14th May, '81, killed.		
Coggleshall Olney,	Capt.	10th Sept., '75,	14th May, '81, to be Major.				
John S. Dexter,	Capt.	1st Jan., '77,	14th May, '81, to be Major.	1st May, '82, 7th Mar., '82.			
Thomas Cole,	Capt.	do.					
Stephen Olney,	Capt.	do.					
William Allen,	Capt.	23d June, '77,					
Thomas Hughes,	Capt.	10th Oct., '77,					
John Holden,	Capt.	22d Oct., '77,					
William Humphrey,	Capt.	11th Nov., '79,					
Zephaniah Brown,	Capt.	11th Nov., '79,	14th May, '81, to be Captain.				
Daniel S. Dexter, I	Capt., Lieut.		14th May, '81, to be Captain.				
Dutce Jermuld,	do.	11th Feb., '77,	14th May, '81, to be Captain.			P. Master,	1st Jan., '81.
Ebenezer Maconber,	Lieut.	12th June, '77,	17th Mar., '82, to be Captain.				
David Sayles, 2	do.	12th June, '77,	1st May, '82, to be Captain.				
Oliver Jenckes,	do.	25th June, '77,			3d Feb., '82, at Philadel'a.	Qt. Master,	1st Jan., '81.
Benj. L. Peckham,	do.	15th April, '79,	22d June, '82, to be Captain.				

1. Resigned the office of Paymaster, 14th May, '81.      2. Resigned the office of Qt. Master, 1st May, '82.



# REGISTER OF THE OFFICERS IN THE RHODE ISLAND REGIMENT,

IN JANUARY, '81, WITH THE SUBSEQUENT APPOINTMENTS AND CASUALTIES THAT HAVE HAPPENED TO  
DECEMBER 31ST, 1782.—(Continued).

NAMES.	RANK.	COMMISSION- ED.	PROMOTED.	RESIGNED.	DEAD.	STAFF APPOINTMENT.	
						WHAT.	WHEN.
John Hubart,	Lieut.	18th May, '79,				P. Master,	14th May, '81.
Chandler Burlingame,	do.	9th June, '79,					
Joseph Wheaton,	do.	30th Aug., '79,					
John M. Greene,	do.	1st May, '80,					
Joseph Masury,	do.	24th June, '80,					
Benja. Shearburne,	do.	1st Jan., '81,					
Henry Shearman,	do.	1st Jan., '81,					
Joseph Greenman,	Ensign.	1st May, '79,	14th May, '81, to be Lieut.			Adjutant,	1st Oct., '82.
William Pratt,	do.	do.	14th May, '81, to be Lieut.				
John Rogers, <sup>3</sup>	do.	do.	3d Feb., '82, to be Lieut.			Adjutant,	1st Jan., '81.
William Ennis,	do.	1st April, '81,	7th Mar., '82, to be Lieut.				
John Welch,	do.	1st July, '81,	1st May, '82, to be Lieut.			Q. Master,	1st May, '82.
Robert Hunter,	do.	2d July, '81,					
Rubin Johnson,	do.	1st Aug., '81,					
Samuel Tenny,	Surgeon.	1st Jan., '77,					
Elias Corbuelius,	Surgn's Mate	1st Jan., '77,					
Nicholas Rogert,	do.	1st May, '81,					
Ephraim Kirby,	Ensign.	23d Aug., '82,					
				3d May, '82, or deserted.			
				1st May, '81.			

3. Resigned office of Adjutant, 1st October, '82.

[From the original, by Lt.-Col. Olney, in the possession of Joseph J. Cooke, Esq.]



LIST OF MEN BELONGING TO THE RHODE ISLAND REGIMENT WHO ARE NOT INTITULED TO RECEIVE ANY PART OF £57 18s. DUE THE REGIMENT FOR RETAINED RATIONS IN 1783, WHILE ON THE STATION AT SARATOGA, THEY ALL BEING ABSENT ON COMMAND, ETC., ETC., AND NOT INCLUDED IN THE COMPANY OR REGIMENTAL PROVISION RETURNS, VIZ.:

Adams Mijah,	Discharged for inability September, 1782.
Davis Brown,	In the Commander-in-Chief's Guard.
Wm. Barrus, Jun.,	In the Sappers and Miners.
Peter Burns,	Invalided in September, 1782.
Jacob Briggs,	do. do.
Nathan Closson,	Transferred to Colonel Amory's Corps in 1781.
George Clarke,	Dead in 1782.
Solomon Daily,	In the Commander-in-Chief's Guard.
Comfort Eddy,	Sick at New Winsor Hospital.
Anthony Foster,	Invalided in 1782.
James Foster,	do. do.
John Hussey,	do. do.
Pharoah Hazard,	do. do.
Prince Ingraham,	In the corps of Sappers and Miners.
John Lawrence,	On Furlough at Killingly.
Francis Lajambo,	Invalided in 1781.
Joseph Manning,	With Colonel Stewart at Head Quarters.
Albro Martin,	Discharged in the year 1781.
Richard Prichard,	With General Greene.
Asher Polock,	With General Hand.
Sigby Richmond,	Invalided in 1781.
Thos. Reynolds,	do. do.
Pompey Reaves,	With Baron DeSteuben—and Deserted.
Fortune Stoddard,	Prisoner at Head of Elk.
Randall Smith,	In the Commander-in-Chief's Guard.
Solomon Trow,	In Virginia Hospital.
Sam'l Tallman,	Discharged in September, 1782.
Limberick Tillinghast,	With General Heath.
Rubin Thompson,	In the Commander-in-Chief's Guard.
Wm. Tanner,	do. do. do.
Frauklin Tennant,	Transferred in 1781 to Colonel Amory's Corps.
Jos. Tanner,	Invalided in 1782.
Benoni Taylor,	do. do.
Cato Varuum,	With Major McPherson.
Simcon White,	Invalided in 1782.

[From the original, by Lt.-Col. Olney, in the possession of Joseph J. Cooke, Esq.]



## RETURN

OF THE MARRIED NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICERS AND PRIVATES IN THE  
RHODE ISLAND REGIMENT, DECEMBER 22, 1782.

## LIGHT INFANTRY.

William Miller,  
Jonathan Soden,  
Robert Claum,  
Robert Dixon,  
Samuel Grant,  
James Demanded,  
Comfort Eddy,  
William Rude,  
William Foster,  
Nicholas Hart,  
Charles Crosby.

## FIRST COMPANY.

Jonah Curtis, Sergeant.  
William Thomas, Corporal.  
David Whitford, Private.  
Daniel Miller, do.  
Abner Blackmor, do.  
Charles Watson, do. Present.  
Charles Timpson, do. do.  
Joseph Manning, do.  
Samuel Merethew, do.

## SIXTH COMPANY.

Aaron Buck, Sergeant.  
Luke H—ll.  
Andrew Barton, Private.  
William Goodson, do.

## FOURTH COMPANY.

Anthony Jenckes, Sergeant.  
Philo Phillips, Private, Present.  
John Brooch, do.  
Simon Barton, do.  
Cuff Greene, do.  
Cato Greene, do.  
John George, do.  
Ceasar Updike, do.

## SEVENTH COMPANY.

Amos Frink, Fifer.  
Henry Carteo, Private.  
David Greene, do.  
Rufus McIntire, do.  
Benjamin Whiley, do.

## THIRD COMPANY.

Lewis Bersayde, Sergeant.  
James Hopkins, do.  
John Dodge, do.  
George Locket, Corporal.  
John Antony, Private.  
Benoni Bates, do. Present.  
William Barnes, do.  
Mijah Ford, do.  
Nathan Jackenwaig, do.  
William Tyler, do.  
Job Shearman, do.



EIGHTH COMPANY.

Daniel Fones, Sergeant, Present.  
 Subel Coffee, Corporal.  
 William Place, do.  
 Prince Greene, Private.  
 Prince Hammond, do.  
 Jehu Tomp, do.  
 Harry Morris, do.  
 Dick Couzens, do.  
 Pomp Reaves, do.

FIFTH COMPANY.

Emanuel Farnis, Private, Present.  
 Michael Anthony, do.  
 Bariah Clarke, do.  
 Samuel Oakman, do.  
 Benjamin Smith, do.  
 John Gold, do. Present.  
 William Salsbury, do.

Rufus Chapman, Private.

William Kipp, do.  
 John Cobb, do.  
 Joseph Smith, do.  
 John Fraizer, do.  
 Griffin Spencer, do.

SECOND COMPANY.

John Boles, Sergeant.  
 Tabour Corey, Private.  
 James Mitchell, do.  
 Mijah Weaver, Jr., do. on Furlough.  
 Hezekiah Hawkins, do. on Furlough.  
 Abitha Willson, do.  
 Jeremiah Whaley, do.  
 Asa Lewis, do.  
 Thomas Harris, do.  
 Joseph Comeingo, do. on Furlough.

(Signed,)

J. GREENMAN, Lt. Agt.,

R. I. R.

[From the original in possession of Joseph J. Cooke, Esq.]



## RETURN OF ALL THE COMMISSIONED OFFICERS

FROM THE STATE OF RHODE ISLAND WHO HAVE BEEN SLAIN OR DIED  
IN THE SERVICE OF THE UNITED STATES. MADE BY LT.-COL. JERE-  
MIAH OLNEY.

NAMES.	RANK.	WHEN KILLED OR DECEASED.	REMARKS.
Augustus Mumford,	Adjutant,	28th August, 1775,	Killed with a cannon ball when the army lay before Boston.
Sylvanus Shaw,	Captain,	22d October, 1777,	Killed in the action of Red Bank, on the Delaware.
Benajah Carpenter,	Capt., Lieut.,	27th August, 1776,	Killed in battle on Long Island.
Nathan Wicks,	Lieutenant,	28th June, 1778,	Killed in the Battle of Monmouth.
John Waterman,	Lieutenant,	20th April, 1778,	Died of small pox at Valley Forge.
Oliver Jenckes,	Lieutenant,	3d February, 1782,	Died of fever at Philadelphia.
Christopher Greene,	Colonel,	14th May, 1781,	Killed by the enemy at Point Bridge, in the State of New York.
David Johnson,	Lieutenant,	22d Nov., 1780,	Died of fever on Rhode Island.
Ebenezer Flagg,	Major,	14th May, 1781,	Killed by the enemy at Point Bridge, in the State of New York.
William Jennings,	Lieutenant,	25th May, 1778,	Died of small pox at Valley Forge.
Noah Allen,	Lieutenant,	16th Sept., 1786,	Killed in an action on Harlem Heights, York Island.
John Thomas,	Ensign,	— August, 1776,	Drowned in the North River in an attempt to burn the enemy's ships.
Hezekiah Medbury,	Ensign,	17th May, 1777,	Died of the small pox in the hospital at Coventry.



## ROLL

OF THE NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICERS AND PRIVATE SOLDIERS WHO  
HAVE BEEN DISCHARGED FROM THIS STATE'S CONTINENTAL BAT-  
TALION FOR INABILITY OF BODY, SHOWING THE DATES OF THEIR  
DISCHARGES.

Peter Burns,	Private,	4th January, 1782,
Pharaoh Hazard,	"	1st September, 1782,
Jacob Briggs,	"	" " "
William Parker,	"	" " "
Francis Robinson,	"	" " "
John Slocum,	"	" " "
Jabez Pratt,	"	" " "
Bristol Rhodes,	"	" " "
Benoni Taylor,	"	4th January, 1783,
Simeon White,	"	" " "
Anthony Foster,	"	14th December, 1782,
Richard Sephton,	"	1st September, 1782,
Abijah Adams,	"	" " "
Joseph Tanner,	"	4th January, 1783,
Samuel Talman,	"	1st September, 1782,
Comfort Eddy,	"	20th June, 1783,
Benvill Loroach,	Sergeant,	28th June, 1783,
Joseph A. Richards,	Corporal,	" " "
Jabez Remington,	Private,	" " "
Southcott Langworthy,	"	" " "
Guy Watson,	"	" " "
Hugh McDougall,	"	" " "
Jack Champlin,	"	" " "
Britain Santonstall,	"	" " "
Prince Jenckes,	"	" " "
Richard Grant,	"	" " "
Robert Piper,	"	" " "
Prince Vaughan,	"	" " "
Prince Greene,	"	" " "

This Roll was prepared by Lieut.-Colonel Jeremiah Olney for the purpose of finding the sums due each man. It was presented to the Assembly, October, 1783, and the men were paid in accordance with it.



COLONEL OLNEY'S ORDERS ON DISBANDING THE  
RHODE ISLAND REGIMENT.

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SARATOGA, 13th June, 1783.

GARRISON ORDERS :

The Happy day having at length arrived when the officers and men engaged for the war are to be disbanded, the liberties and Independence of America being (through their extraordinary sufferings and exertions in conjunction with the other troops in the field) fully established and acknowledged by our enemy, the Commandant though happy on the occasion, cannot dismiss those brave officers and men he has so long had the honour to command without experiencing the keenest sensibility at a parting scene, and to acknowledge the very great share of merit they have acquired in faithfully persevering in the best of causes in every stage of service with unexampled fortitude and patience through all the dangers and toils of a long and severe war, and he is at the same time extremely



happy in the opportunity to declare his entire approbation of their valour and good conduct displayed on every occasion when called to face the enemy in the field, and of their prompt obedience to order and discipline through every stage of service; and it affords him the most perfect satisfaction and pleasure to find those brave men now retire from the theatre of war to the more tranquil walks of civil life with that conscious honor and applause that is only to be experienced by long and faithful service in the righteous cause of God and our country. The Commandant has to lament that such faithful service has heretofore been so illy rewarded, and painful indeed is it to him to see the officers and men retire from the field without receiving any pay, or even their accounts settled and the balances due ascertained; however, he cannot doubt the Honest intentions of the public to discharge with honour (so soon as their finances will admit) all the just dues of the army, and he has reason to hope Congress or the State will make provision shortly for paying some money on account, and give good securities on interest for the Ballances due each individual, the Commandant



having ever taken a pride and pleasure in serving a chore of officers and men for whom he has contracted, through a series of long service and sufferings, the most affectionate regard and esteem and which no time nor circumstances can eradicate; he now voluntarily offers a continuance of his interest in their favour, and shall be happy to be usefull to them in future in using his endeavours to obtain their just dues from the public and on every other proper occasion. The Commandant now begs leave to address those officers and men who having a longer time to serve continue in the field; it affords him particular satisfaction to see a disposition in the officers and men to end their engagements in their usual regularity and good order which will reflect on them the Highest Honour, and ere long return them with the conscious applause of having preserved a constancy of character to the injoyment of their families and friends, and during their continuance in the field he wishes them the injoyment of every satisfaction and pleasure the nature of service can possibly admitt.

*[From the original in the possession of Joseph J. Cooke, Esq.]*

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